

Hamas activist jailed for 24 years

LOD (AFP) — An Israeli military court sentenced a Palestinian Islamist from Gaza to 24 years in jail Monday for involvement in various attacks on Israelis, Israel Radio said. Hatem Ismail, 28, was convicted of planning a suicide attack on a Jerusalem bus which killed four civilians and wounded around 100 in August 1995. Ismail was also found guilty of involvement in another attempted attack claimed by Hamas, the largest Palestinian activist group, in Jerusalem in December 1995. Ismail was also accused of training Hamas activists involved in the 1994 kidnapping of an Israeli soldier who was killed during an attempted rescue operation. The court said he had close links with two leading members of Hamas's military wing — Yehiya Ayyash, who was killed by presumed Israeli agents, and Mohammad Deif, who Israel says is in hiding in the Gaza Strip.

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Israeli premier suspends West Bank troop pullback

TEL AVIV (AP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced Monday that he is suspending an Israeli troop pullback in the West Bank — scheduled for later this week — until the Palestinians drop plans to declare independence in May.

The Palestinians accused Netanyahu of using excuses to get out of his commitments.

Netanyahu made the announcement in a speech to parliament that kicked off a two-day debate on the agreement under which Israel is to withdraw from 13 per cent of the West Bank by the end of January. The prime minister is upset over recent remarks by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat who has renewed a pledge to declare statehood in May and said that "our rifle is ready" to take Jerusalem.

"I do not intend to implement any withdrawal under these circumstances... until these things are corrected in public," Netanyahu told legislators in a speech frequently interrupted by heckling.

Netanyahu said he would convene his cabinet on Wednesday to review the suspension of the withdrawal. On Sunday night, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators had agreed that Israel would withdraw from two per cent of the West Bank by the weekend. Under the original time-table, the Israeli withdrawal was to have begun Monday.

The land-for-security agreement is assured the support of some 90 of 120 legislators, and Netanyahu's speech was mainly aimed at hard-liners who have threatened to topple his coalition. Netanyahu portrayed himself as a tough negotiator who would not put up with what he said were repeated attempts by the Palestinians to violate the accord.

"In the past year and a half, we haven't moved an inch," Netanyahu told the Knesset.

"Unlike others, we do not believe in illusions, a new Middle East," Netanyahu said. "The Palestinians will test us every day and we will stand firm."

Later, he spoke more vehemently. "What sort of thing is this, this threat of violence with rifles? If we do not accept the Palestinian demand of a division of Jerusalem, they will use those rifles against us?" he told Israel's Channel Two TV. "There cannot be such disputes."

Arafat adviser Ahmad Tibi said Netanyahu was "trying to avoid and escape implementation." Tibi also accused Israel of violating the accord with inflammatory statements, referring to Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon's call on Jewish settlers to seize land in the West Bank before a troop withdrawal.

Before his speech, Netanyahu called Arafat to seek clarifications, but was not satisfied with Arafat's responses, Israel Radio said. Palestinian officials confirmed the phone call, but refused to discuss its contents.

However, in an attempt to soften Arafat's words, two senior aides said the Palestinians were committed to the peace agreement and their talk about statehood in May was intended to prod Israel into not dragging out negotiations on a permanent



A Palestinian farming family stands with a large banner calling for the end of settlements and land expropriation during a protest over land confiscation to build an Israeli 'bypass' road near Al Khader outside Bethlehem on Monday (Reuters photo)

Jewish settlers seize hill in the West Bank

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Jewish settlers set up two trailers on a remote West Bank hilltop Monday, a day after Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon urged settlers to grab land ahead of an Israeli troop pullback.

Settler leader Daniela Weiss said the group was encouraged by Sharon's statements which the Palestinians denounced as a violation of the new land-for-security agreement.

"We understood that the attitude of the Israeli govern-

ment is that he who holds the land determines policy and we are acting accordingly," Weiss told Israel Radio.

Israel Radio said police later ordered the settlers to leave. As housing minister in the early 1990s, Sharon was responsible for a massive settlement construction drive in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Sharon said Monday that Israel would expand existing settlements and defend his remarks that settlers should seize land near their commu-

nities ahead of the impending troop pullback.

"If we are talking about seizing the hills, there are... hills that dominate the existing settlements, state land, and this is aimed not at increasing tension but on decreasing tension in the future," Sharon told American Jewish leaders.

In a related development, three ultra-nationalist rabbis issued a formal religious ruling that Israel's government is violating Jewish law by handing territory to the Palesti-

ans.

The three signatories were Dov Lior of the Jewish settlement of Kiryat Arba, Yitzhak Ginsburg of the Joseph's Tomb seminary in the West Bank town of Nablus and Yaakov Yosef, the son of Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, the spiritual leader of the religious Shas Party.

Many of the Jewish settlers in the West Bank are religious, and the three rabbis have an influence on at least some of the settlers.

(Continued on page 12)

Three Israeli soldiers killed in Lebanon

TEL AVIV (R) — The Israeli army said three of its soldiers were killed and four wounded by a roadside bomb in South Lebanon on Monday.

In Beirut, the pro-Iranian Hizbollah guerrilla group told Reuters it planted the bomb, which hit an Israeli patrol in Markaba in the central section of the 15-kilometre deep zone of Lebanon occupied by Israeli forces.

The incident was one of the bloodiest to strike Israeli forces in South Lebanon this year.

"Three Israeli army soldiers were killed and four soldiers were wounded, two seriously, one moderately and one lightly, in a bomb explosion this afternoon," an army communiqué said.

The army said the Israeli force had been on its way to a fire training drill near their post when the bomb exploded. Israeli censors delayed publication of the incident for hours until the families of the victims had been notified.

Security sources in Lebanon had earlier put the

death toll at one.

The explosion raised the number of Israelis killed in South Lebanon to 15 so far this year.

Hizbollah has been fighting to oust Israel and its South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia from the southern zone.

Another roadside explosion killed three SLA members earlier this month. Since January, 31 SLA militiamen have been killed.

Earlier on Monday, Israeli warplanes blasted suspected Hizbollah targets just north

of the occupation zone. There were no reports of casualties.

"Israeli air force planes attacked this morning terrorist targets in the Jabal Soujoud area in the eastern sector of South Lebanon," said an Israeli army statement issued in Jerusalem.

"The pilots reported accurate hits."

Security sources said the planes fired four rockets in what was Israel's 97th raid on the south so far this year.

Regent attends celebration, opens Koran radio station

AQABA (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Monday joined Aqaba worshippers who were celebrating Al Israa Wal Mi'raj and inaugurated a local radio station broadcasting verses of the Holy Koran.

Addressing worshippers at the Al Hussein Ben Ali Mosque in Aqaba, the Regent said that the Hashemites have offered many sacrifices over the years providing protection to the Al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock in the Holy City of Jerusalem and have carried out repeated restoration of these shrines.

Ever since the Great Arab Revolt, led by Sharif Al Hussein Ben Ali early this century, the Hashemite family has been struggling to protect the holy shrines and offered many martyrs

who fell for this cause, the Regent said.

He said that King Abdullah, the founder of the Kingdom, who was martyred in Jerusalem and buried at Al Aqsa Mosque, and the Arab army, led by Sharif Hussein, offered huge sacrifices in defence of Palestine and the Holy City.

The Al Israa Wal Mi'raj marks Prophet Mohammad's nocturnal journey to heaven from Al Aqsa Mosque in the city of Jerusalem, which is the third holiest shrine for Muslims, the Regent added.

He said that the Hashemites have continued the struggle to defend the Islamic shrines and Arab rights.

In his address, the Regent pointed out that Christian leaders in the Kingdom are participating in this reli-

gious occasion manifesting a true picture of brotherly ties, religious tolerance and national unity.

Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdul Salam Al Abbadi delivered an address thanking the Regent for opening the radio station which, he said, will be broadcasting the Holy Koran.

He said the ministry is planning to open similar broadcasting stations in other parts of the Kingdom in cooperation with the Ministry of Information, the Radio and Television Corporation and the Jordan Telecommunications Company.

Present at the ceremony were Information Minister Nasser Judeh, senior government officials and heads of local public and private organisations in Aqaba.

Turkey exerts maximum effort to secure handover of Ocalan

ANKARA (AFP) — The Turkish government is making a full-out effort to secure the handover of Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan, who has been detained in Italy, even moving to abolish its death penalty to facilitate an extradition.

Militant supporters of Ocalan's Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) meanwhile mounted a campaign to secure his release.

Turkish Defence Minister Ismet Sezgin met in Rome with his Italian counterpart Carlo Scognamiglio on the sidelines of a gathering of European defence and foreign ministers, and the Ocalan affair was believed to have been top of the agenda, sources said.

Earlier, Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem told La Repubblica newspaper that Italy must hand over Ocalan who, he said, was a "terrorist criminal."

Cem warned that Ankara would take an "immediate decision" on its ties with Rome "depending on the position of Italy."

"According to international laws your authorities must send to our country the head of the PKK who is a terrorist criminal," Cem told the Italian newspaper, adding that Turkey's extradition request would be sent to Rome "imminently."

The PKK meanwhile threatened "consequences" against countries supporting Ankara in its

bid for extradition of Ocalan to Turkey.

"The United States and other forces have supported the Turkish republic" against the PKK, the organisation said in a statement received in Ankara.

Unless they abandon this stand, "they will have to bear the consequences when our people exercise their legitimate right of self-defence," the statement said.

The Turkish justice ministry at the same time launched preparations to abolish the death penalty, because Italian law does not allow extraditions to countries that practise capital punishment.

Justice Minister Hasan Denizkurdu told the Turkish daily Hurriyet that he would present the draft to the cabinet this week, before sending it to parliament for adoption.

Both Turkish newspapers and the PKK on Monday published the fax numbers of Italy's foreign, interior and justice ministries urging the public to write and pressure the authorities in Rome.

The draft letter recommended by the Turkish press called for the extradition of "one of the bloodiest terrorists of the century," while the PKK's draft appealed for political asylum for "the heart, soul and representative of the hopes and aspirations of 40 million Kurdish people around the world."

In a related development, Germany's Interior Minister Otto Schily arrived in Rome to discuss Ocalan's arrest with his Italian counterpart, Rosa Russo Jervolino.

Ocalan is wanted in Germany for murder, and directed terrorist organisation, but German federal prosecutor's office last week said it had not yet decided whether it would demand the extradition of the Kurdish leader.

Ocalan was detained Thursday when he arrived in Rome on a plane from Moscow. He formally requested political asylum after his arrest by Italy's anti-terrorist police acting on an international warrant.

Hundreds of Kurds from across Europe poured into Rome over the weekend to support Ocalan, who has been charged with high treason in Turkey and is held responsible there for more than 30,000 deaths in his organisation's armed struggle for Kurdish autonomy in the Anatolia region.

Meanwhile, dozens of Kurds in Romania, Hungary and Lebanon went on hunger strike, saying they would refuse food until Italy gave Ocalan political asylum.

In Strasbourg, France, some 100 Kurds also gathered to demonstrate support for Ocalan for the third straight day.

(Continued on page 12)

Iraq blasts Clinton as evacuated U.N. staff head back to Baghdad

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq on Monday blasted U.S. President Bill Clinton's call for a new government in Baghdad, as evacuated U.N. staff were set to return and Washington froze its military buildup in the Gulf.

U.N. arms chief Richard Butler and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) meanwhile, said their weapons inspectors would return to Baghdad on Tuesday to test Iraq's offer of renewed cooperation.

But U.N. diplomats in New York feared that a new hardening of U.S. policy toward Iraq meant that a new crisis, and U.S. military strikes, was just a matter of time.

Official Iraqi newspapers, echoing criticism from

Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz, said Clinton's call for a new government was tantamount to a violation of the U.N. Charter.

Babel, a newspaper run by President Saddam Hussein's son Uday, said Clinton had, in public, "exposed the truth over the U.S. policy of aggression and evil" against Iraq.

As the threat of U.S. military action eased, Aziz "strongly" condemned Clinton's call. "This is a flagrant violation of [U.N.] Security Council resolutions as well as international law," he said.

Clinton, while keeping up the pressure on Iraq over arms inspections, said at a press conference that Washington would also intensify efforts to install a democratic govern-

ment in Baghdad.

"The best way to address [the] threat is through a government in Baghdad — a new government that is committed to represent and respect its people, not repress them," he said.

And British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said Monday he would "very much" like to see Saddam removed from power but that the "brutality" of the regime stifled opposition.

But French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine on Monday said France has no intention of supporting U.S. plans to back the overthrow of Saddam.

"France doesn't have the tradition of doing what the United States does, a right they have given themselves,"

Jordan hails calming of Iraqi-U.N. crisis

AMMAN (AFP) — Jordan on Monday welcomed the defusing of the latest Iraqi crisis with the United Nations but stressed that the only way for Iraq to get the U.N. embargo lifted was to cooperate with international arms inspectors.

"Jordan is pleased with the diplomatic solution of the Iraqi-U.N. crisis and hopes that Baghdad will submit to international resolutions," Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Al Khuthb said.

"Iraq's commitment to cooperate with the U.N. inspectors is the only way to settle the problem and end the suffering of the Iraqi people," he said.

"Jordan intervened with Iraq to get it to resume its cooperation with the United Nations, in line with a request from permanent members of the Security Council," the minister said.

Vedrine said in a radio interview.

After Clinton spoke the Pentagon revealed that the president had ordered and aborted

U.S. air strikes against Iraq in a hair-raising episode of brinkmanship.

"It was close, and I would say very close," said U.S.

The Kingdom "worked for a diplomatic solution so as to stave off from the region the dangers of military intervention," he added.

The United Nations is to lift the embargo imposed on Iraq for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait once the inspectors certify that Baghdad has eliminated its weapons of mass destruction and long-range missiles.

But Iraq halted all cooperation with U.N. inspectors at the end of October and demanded that the United Nations lift its embargo.

With the United States poised to attack Iraq to force it to comply with the United Nations, Baghdad backed down over the weekend and said it would cooperate with the inspectors.

Defence Secretary William

Cohen, confirming reports that a massive air attack was aborted at the last minute as Baghdad reversed its break

with U.N. weapons inspectors.

(Continued on page 12)

Big increase in Jewish settlement construction, Peace Now says

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel has allowed the construction of housing in Jewish settlements in the West Bank to more than double, Peace Now said Wednesday, an assessment likely to further anger Palestinians already frustrated with the peace process.

There were 1,420 homes started in the settlements in the first half of 1998, the leader of the peace activist group said in a statement, 136 per cent more than in the same period last year.

In the second half of 1998, construction of 640 homes began in the settlements, 121 per cent more than in the same period of 1997, Mossi Raz said.

The figures were obtained from a report of the Israeli government's Central Bureau of Statistics, Raz said.

Only a minority of the

houses were being built by the government itself, but private construction requires government approval.

Settlers have placed mobile homes on eight new sites in the vicinity of the settlements since U.S.-brokered negotiations at Wye River, Maryland, revived the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians in October.

Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon has called on the settlers to seize the hilltops to ensure that they do not come under Palestinian control.

Peace Now said that its officials spotted 43 trailers on hilltops in a helicopter flight.

The Palestinians, who wish to establish an independent state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, say settlement expansion violates the 1993 Oslo accords because it is a unilateral act which threatens to predetermine the final outcome of negotiations.

tions.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu maintains that expansion of the settlements is not prohibited by the Oslo accords and that the settlements should be expanded to accommodate "natural population growth."

The Palestinians accused Netanyahu this week of not being serious about the Wye accords because of his refusal to move ahead with a scheduled troop withdrawal from the West Bank and with prisoner releases.

Netanyahu says he wants to see solid evidence that the Palestinians are containing incitement and collecting illegal weapons.

Peace Now leader Raz said the trailer parks are illegal and called on the Israeli Civil Administration in the West Bank to enforce the law and evacuate the settlers with their trailers.



PALESTINIAN HOUSE DEMOLISHED IN JERUSALEM: Hafez Abu Baba at watches Wednesday as his home is demolished in an Arab east Jerusalem neighbourhood. Baba at said the Jerusalem municipality issued an order for Israeli police and border police to destroy the home, saying it was built without a permit. Baba at and two brothers along with their families totalling 35 people lived in the home. Police arrested one of Baba at's brothers while the demolition was taking place (Reuters photo)

Ecevit close to failure in bid to form Turkish government

ANKARA (R) — Turkish leftist Bulent Ecevit appeared close to failure on Wednesday in his efforts to form the country's sixth government in three years.

President Süleyman Demirel nominated Ecevit earlier this month to form an administration that could shore up an ailing economy and steer the country to an early general election next April.

But his attempts to glue together different shards of a parliament divided by personal rivalries has gone badly and successive plans have been dashed.

On Wednesday a conservative who had made up a section of Ecevit's planned government said the leftist should give up his hopes of building an administration and tell Demirel he had failed.

"Every 10 days he pulls a new government formula out of his hat... It is clear Ecevit must hand back the mandate," former Prime Minister Tansu Ciller told her deputies in parliament.

Parliamentary sources say Ecevit is likely to visit Demirel on Friday amid uncertainty over whether he plans to throw in the towel or persevere.

If Ecevit yields the mandate, Demirel must find another prime minister-designate. If, by Jan. 10, no government has been found, the president is empowered to appoint a prime minister. Ministerial posts would have to be parcelled out according to parties' parliamentary strength.

Turkish shares ended the day 6.5 per cent down on pessimism that a government would be formed in the near future.

Political instability has plagued Turkey since 1995.

Corruption charges downed the last government in November, just as signs began to emerge of a drastic slowdown of the country's economy.

The caretaker government last week announced measures designed to shield the economy and boost stagnant exports but big business has called for a stronger administration.

Turkey is also embroiled in a dispute with Italy over Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan. An Italian court on Wednesday freed Ocalan, wanted in Turkey for treason and murder in its Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) campaign for Kurdish self-rule.

Militants in PNA jail announce hunger strike

JENIN (AFP) — Eight Islamists jailed in this Palestinian-run town announced Wednesday that they had started a hunger strike in protest at their detention and in solidarity with Palestinians imprisoned in Israel.

The eight, all members of the radical Islamic Jihad movement and the only political detainees in the Jenin jail, announced their strike in a message sent to reporters from the prison.

The militants complained they had been held without trial as part of a crackdown by the Palestinian National Authority on Islamic radicals and other opponents of peace accords with Israel.

"We call on our people to support our request for release since we have all been freed from Israeli jails and have been rearrested on orders from the Israelis," they said in their statement.

They also said their protest was a show of solidarity with the more than 2,000 political detainees in Israeli jails who ended a 10-day hunger strike of their own Tuesday.

The prisoners in Israel

had been protesting against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's decision to free mostly common criminals rather than political detainees among the 750 Palestinians he agreed to release under the October Wye River peace accord.

Netanyahu has firmly refused to release the vast majority of political prisoners on the grounds they have Israeli "blood on their hands," even though a large number of the detainees were arrested prior to the Oslo peace agreements and belong to groups which signed onto the accords.

His decision sparked a wave of violent protests in the Palestinian territories which led to an Israeli decision last week to suspend a further West Bank withdrawal required by the Wye accords.

Netanyahu confirmed Wednesday that he would not order the new pullback by Friday as required by the Wye agreement, saying the Palestinians were not living up to their obligations under the accord, notably by allowing the recent protest violence.

Uproar in Israel over Clinton comparison

TEL AVIV (AP) — It was meant as a reconciliatory moment: a husky-voiced President Bill Clinton describing "profoundly emotional" meetings with Palestinian children with fathers in Israeli jails and Israeli children whose fathers were killed in the conflict with Palestinians.

Instead, the comment touched a raw nerve in Israel, triggering an outcry over what was perceived as too close a parallel drawn between the sufferings of Israeli terror victims and Palestinian attackers.

The uproar, which clearly caught the Americans by surprise, illustrates how even someone who knows the Mideast minefield as well as Clinton does can easily make a misstep.

On both sides, certain topics — and the code words for them — are so emotionally freighted that the simplest and most well-

meaning observation can ignite a firestorm.

"I thought it was a very powerful way of making a point that people here have suffered on both sides," Clinton's national security adviser, Sandy Berger, told reporters in response to the Israeli criticism.

The incident occurred as Clinton appealed for Israel and the Palestinians to press ahead with the land-for-security accord signed Oct. 23 in Washington.

Addressing a historic session of the Palestinians' parliament-in-exile in Gaza City on Monday, he described separate meetings with Palestinian children whose fathers were imprisoned for anti-Israeli activity and Israeli youngsters whose fathers had been killed.

"These children brought tears to my eyes," Clinton said, his voice nearly cracking. "We have to find a way for both sets

of children to get their lives back and to go forward."

Within hours, Israelis from across the political spectrum were voicing objections. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's assessment — though subdued compared to his broadsides of recent days — was nonetheless a rebuke.

"I don't know what the president meant by it, but it came out as though there's a comparison between the suffering of the children of the murderers and the children of those who were murdered," the prime minister said at a news conference.

Even former Prime Minister Shimon Peres, a strong supporter of Clinton and the peace process, said the president had "slipped up... He made a mistake in the comparison."

Press commentary reflected the widely held Israeli view that outsiders simply do not understand what it is like to live in a

country burdened by the daily threat of suicide bombings and other attacks aimed at civilians.

Clinton's "equation of children whose parents are in Israeli prisons and children who lost their parents in acts of terror is unjust," commentator Nahum Barnea, whose son died in a bus bombing nearly three years ago, wrote in Tuesday's editions of the Yediot daily. "Clinton is too intelligent not to know that not all tears are equal."

Outside Clinton's hotel, relatives of the victims of Palestinian attacks staged a protest Tuesday to denounce the remarks. West Bank settler Yoel Tzur, whose wife and son were killed in a shooting near the town of Ramallah two years ago, said the comparison reflected a "lack of balance."

In talking about how the Israeli and Palestinian children affected him, Clinton might

have thought he was making a point about common experience that few would quarrel with — especially his conclusion that "neither side has a monopoly on pain or virtue." In fact, throughout decades of conflict, both Israel and the Palestinians have always resisted acknowledging the other's suffering. Many Palestinians speak slightly of the Holocaust; Israel this year celebrated the 50th anniversary of its independence with little mention that their new state spawned hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees.

For their part, the Palestinians see anyone jailed in the struggle against the 30-year Israeli military occupation — even those who carried out killings — as a fighter for the national cause, not a criminal. Hardly a Palestinian family has not had a relative jailed at some point during the Israeli occupation.

Iran reformers say killings could spark crackdown

TEHRAN (R) — Reformers backing Iranian President Mohammad Khatami cautioned on Wednesday that recent political murders could provide a pretext for a hardline crackdown, as the government told writers it was doing all it could to end the killings.

Officials have announced several arrests in connection with the murders that have so far claimed at least three secularist writers and two political dissidents, but the failure to provide details or to identify the alleged killers has raised

deep suspicions among pro-Khatami forces.

The new Islamic Iran Participation Front, founded this month by key pro-Khatami figures, challenged the conservative-run judiciary and security services to find the killers.

The group did not overtly question the official view, expressed by Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, that the murders were tied to hostile foreign powers out to undermine the Islamic republic. But it said conservatives

were exploiting the resultant fear and uncertainty for their own political aims.

"The mysterious role of some dogmatic and totalitarian media, who have directed their explicit attacks at the president... indicates a calculated plan for the suppression of civil liberties and creation of an atmosphere of panic," the front said in a statement published on Wednesday.

A coalition of moderate student groups demanded to know why the murders of figures associated with the conservatives, such as former prison chief Assadollah

Lajevardi, were resolved quickly while officials appeared at a loss to halt the killing of dissident secularists.

Some moderates have expressed concern that the spate of killings could be part of a campaign by conservatives opposed to Khatami's liberal reforms to undermine his government.

But top conservative figures reiterated on Wednesday that only enemies, including Israel and the United States, could benefit from a terror campaign hurting Iran's national security.

10:35	Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)
11:25	Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
12:05	Kuwait (RJ)
12:10	Paris (RJ)
12:15	London (RJ)
12:15	Athens (RJ)
19:35	Larnaca (RJ)
20:10	Cairo (RJ)
20:45	Jeddah (add) (RJ)
00:10	Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)
00:50	Jeddah (RJ)

Other Flights	
06:35	Damascus, London (BA)
07:10	Frankfurt (LH)
14:45	Riyadh (SV)
15:00	Annabsh, Algiers (AF)
15:30	Rome (AZ)
15:35	Doha (QR)
17:00	Damascus, Dubai (EK)
18:15	Abu Dhabi, Muscat (GF)
20:00	Beirut (ME)
21:10	Tel Aviv (LY)
01:45	Cairo (MS)
02:15	Moscow (SU)
04:45	Amsterdam (KL)
04:45	Alexandria (BA)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights	
For Thursday	
07:00	Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
08:30	Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:30	Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)
22:00	Tel Aviv (from QAIA) (RW)

For Friday	
07:00	Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
08:30	Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
16:30	Tel Aviv (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:30	Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION
Tel. 4773111-19
PROGRAMME TWO
Thursday Programmes

15:10	Cartoon — Superman
15:30	Science fiction — Space Precinct
16:30	Doc. — Science Show
17:00	French Programme
18:15	Drama — Sparks
19:00	Le Journal
19:15	French Programme
19:30	News Headlines
19:35	Comedy — Family Matters
20:00	Doc. — Museums of the World
20:30	Drama — Dr. Quinn the Medicine Woman
21:10	Oprah Winfrey Show
22:00	News in English
22:30	Feature film — "Percy and Thunder"
23:59	Comedy — Daily
00:30	End of T.V.

Friday Programmes	
15:10	Cartoon — The Hunchback of Notre Dame
15:30	Doc. — Treasure Hunt
16:30	Feature film
18:00	The Simpsons
19:00	Le Journal
19:15	French Programme
19:30	News Headlines
19:35	Comedy — The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
20:00	Cinema, Cinema
20:30	Drama — "Babylon - 5"
21:15	Doc. — Every Man
22:00	News in English
22:30	Drama — The X Files
23:10	Drama — The Preppie Murder
23:59	End of T.V.

PRAYER TIMES

05:02	Fajr
06:24	(Sunrise) Duha

11:32	Dhuhr
14:16	'Asr
16:39	Maghreb
18:01	'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church	
Sweith, Tel. 5920740	
Assemblies of God Church Tel.	
4632785	
St. Joseph Church Tel.	
4624590	
Terra Sancta Church Tel.	
4622366	
Anglican Church Tel.	
4624853/4624811	
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel.	
4771751	
Arman International Church Tel.	
5865897	
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel.	
5688404	
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel.	
5811295	
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel.	
4654932	
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel.	
5661757	
Church of the Annunciation Tel.	
4637440	
Greek Orthodox Church Tel.	
4646138	
Church of Presentation, Sweith Tel.	
5920146	
The Uniate Catholic Church Tel.	
4624757	
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel.	
4614190	
Evangelical Free Church Tel.	
4892679	
The Baptist Church Tel.	
4628052	
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel.	
4771331	
The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel.	
4775261	

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Relative cold weather conditions will prevail and skies cloudy to partly cloudy. Scattered showers are expected in the northern and central parts of the Kingdom, and winds southwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be moderate, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Amman	.....05/14
Aqaba	.....10/21
Deserts	.....03/17
Jordan Valley	.....10/22

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 15, Aqaba 20
Humidity readings: Amman 51 per cent, Aqaba 44 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun	.....04/10
Jerash	.....10/16
Um Qays	.....08/15
Madaba	.....05/13
Petra	.....04/15
Dead Sea	.....12/23

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:	
Dr.	ABF

Shukri	.....4898863
Dr. Nidal Dabbeh	.....5827195
Dr. Youssef Nasser	.....4751144
Dr. Hanna Mansour	.....4750197

AMMAN:	
Firas Pharmacy	.....5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy	.....4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy	.....5537004
Rakn Al Dawa Pharmacy	.....5536169

IRBID:	
Dr. Issam Solih	.....(02)246858
Fou'ad Pharmacy	.....(02)275362

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre	.....4637111
Civil Defence Department	.....5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue	.....4630341
Civil Defence Emergency	.....199
Rescue Police 192	.....4621111
Fire Brigade	.....4617101
Blood Bank	.....4775121
Highway Police	.....5343402
Traffic police	.....4896390
Public Security Dept.	.....4630321
Hotel Complaints	.....5605800
Price Complaints	.....5661176
War & Sewage Complaints	.....489467
Amman Municipality Complaints	.....4787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)	.....121
Overseas Calls	.....0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs	.....4623101
Abdall Tel. Repairs	.....5661101
Jordan Television	.....4773111
Radio Jordan	.....4774111

Water Authority	.....5680100
J. Electricity Authority	.....5815615
Electric Power Co.	.....4636381
RJ Flight Information	.....44-53200
Queen Alia Int'l. Airport	.....44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:	
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery	.....5921199
The Islamic, Abdil	.....56661317
Hussein Medical Centre	.....5856856
Luzmila	.....4630195
Khalidi Maternity	.....46423816
Akileh Maternity	.....46424412
Jabal Amman Maternity	.....4642362
Malhas, J. Amman	.....4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani	.....5607071
Shmeisani Hospital	.....5607431
Jordan Hospital	.....5607530
University Hospital	.....5355444
Al-Mushar Hospital	.....56672279
Al-Ahli, Abdal	.....56641646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen	.....4771013
Al-Bashir	.....4775111/26
Army, Marka	.....4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital	.....5157100
Amal Hospital	.....5607155
Al Anfal Cancer Centre	.....5353000

ZARQA:	
Zarqa Govt. Hospital	.....(09)83323
Zarqa National Hospital	.....(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital	.....(09)86731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital	.....(09)990990

IRBID:	
Princess Basma Hospital	.....(02)275555
Roman Catholic Hospital	.....(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital(02)7101372
Rosary Sisters Hospital(02)7102831
Specialty Hospital(02)7103100

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PRINCE GHAZI ATTENDS RELIGIOUS CEREMONY: Deputising for HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, HRH Prince Ghazi Ben Mohammad on Monday attends a religious ceremony organised by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs at King Abdullah Mosque to mark Al Israa Wal Mi'raj (Prophet Mohammad's journey to heaven). The ceremony involved speeches as well as recitals of verses from the Holy Koran. The ceremony was attended by Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdul Al Salam Abbadi and senior government officials (Petra photo)

New guidelines aim to restrict bedouin practice of 'tribal exile'

AMMAN (J.T.) — A custom among Jordan's bedouin tribes connected with means of settling feuds through acts of revenge could be on the way towards being phased out if a document sponsored by HRH Prince Ghazi Ben Mohammad is put into force.

The document, which is meant to deal with what is known to bedouins as "tribal exile," would not eliminate the custom completely but rather is aimed at restricting acts in which relatives of a murdered tribe member seek revenge on members of the murderer's tribe.

Prominent tribal leaders representing all tribes in the Kingdom on Saturday signed the document before HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, in the presence of Prince Ghazi, who serves as His Majesty King Hussein's advisor on tribal affairs.

Tribal exile is a venerable practice among bedouin tribes that entails a permanent collective movement of a tribe from a city, village or settlement to another area of the country in the event of a crime committed by one of its members against a member of another tribe living in the same area. This practice was adopted in order to prevent acts of vengeance on the part of victims' tribes.

But under the terms of the document, only the close relatives of the murderer — his father, sons and brothers — must leave their residences and relocate elsewhere in the country to avoid acts of revenge. Uncles, cousins and nephews are not required to move, as had been previously required. More importantly, the document limits exile to one year, after which time the accused's family may return.

In presenting the document at the meeting with the Regent at the Sports City, Prince Ghazi said: "In the past, tribal exile used to prevent further crimes... but in our days, it has been causing untold tragedies now that the bedouins are settled in towns and villages."

"Tribal exile, which is considered a non-Islamic custom, used to serve as collective punishment for the criminal's relatives and kinsmen, who in fact in all cases denounce the crimes committed by one or more of the tribe's members and sometimes had nothing to do with or knew nothing about the crimes."

According to the document, local governors and the police are committed to implementing its provisions in the parts of the country for which they are responsible. Commenting on the plan,

Lower House Speaker Sa'd Hayel Srour, himself a member of a tribe, said the document is a wise step, especially as tribal leaders have become convinced that so much injustice is being done to many families under this custom.

Srour said tribal exile is no longer suitable for the modern age.

He noted that in the past, bedouins could easily move their tents to other areas. But they now all live in houses, and law and order is being guaranteed through security services, Srour added.

Interior Minister Nayef Qadi, who attended the signing of the document, said the agreement was necessary in view of the present social and economic situation of the bedouins, who live, like other Jordanians, under the umbrella of the rule of the law.

NEWS IN BRIEF

German president arrives today

AMMAN (J.T.) — German President Roman Herzog today begins his first visit to Jordan since his election four years ago as part of a regional tour that will also take him to the Palestinian self-rule areas and Israel. German Ambassador Peter Mende said Sunday. Herzog and his wife, visiting upon the invitation of Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor, will be the guests of Their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, and Princess Sarvath. Mende said Herzog's visit reflects the close ties between Germany and Jordan and the development of their mutual cooperation over the past 15 years. Jordan has been among the top countries over the past four decades receiving German assistance, which has reached around DM2 billion.

Airport staff mark King's birthday

AMMAN (Petra) — Passengers arriving at Queen Alia International Airport were offered sweets and flowers Monday to mark His Majesty King Hussein's 63rd birthday. Customs officials at the airport also presented greeting cards to passengers to welcome them to Jordan.

Qoreia arrives today for talks

AMMAN (Petra) — Palestinian Legislative Council President Ahmad Qoreia will arrive here today for an official visit to discuss bilateral issues with senior Jordanian officials. Qoreia will meet with Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh, the speakers of the Lower House and Senate and several directors of parliamentary committees to discuss Jordanian-Palestinian cooperation. Qoreia's delegation will also visit the Royal Scientific Society.

Astronomers prepare for meteor shower

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordan Astronomical Society last night began its 23rd astronomical camp near Azraq to watch the Leonids meteor shower, which is expected to be visible in the sky from 7 p.m. Tuesday until 1 a.m. Wednesday. Astronomers expect as many as 10,000 small meteors to spray the atmosphere every hour in a fireworks-like display, which occurs once every 33 years. U.S. scientists with NASA are scheduled to fly two research aircraft loaded with an array of scientific instruments over Japan to observe the meteor storm. According to NASA, Asia had the first documented Leonids sighting in 902 A.D., when Chinese astronomers reported seeing a meteor storm. The heaviest Leonids storms observed were in 1833, when an estimated 240,000 meteors were observed over nine hours, and in 1966, when the rate peaked at 40 per second.

Bahraini official arrives

AMMAN (Petra) — The president of Bahrain's Youth Welfare Organisation, Sheikh Issa Ben Rashed, Monday arrived in Amman to take part in a meeting of the Arab Youth Ministerial Committee, which opens here on Wednesday. The committee was formed by the Council of Arab Ministers of Sports and Youth to follow up on Jordan's preparations for the Ninth Pan-Arab Games, which will be held in Jordan from Aug. 15-31 next year. The tournament's director, Issam Andia, accompanied Ben Rashed on a tour of Prince Abdullah Sports City in Qweimah, where many of the games' events will be held. Also Monday, two officials from the Arab League, Assistant Secretary General Dhau Sweidan and Youth and Sports Department Director Hani Mustafa, arrived to take part in the meeting.

What's going on

- FILM**
- "Novemberstorm" (The Cats of November) at Goethe-Institut, Jabel Amman on Wednesday Nov. 18 at 7:00 p.m.
- CONCERTS**
- Musical performance by the German Military Music-Corps and the Jordan Armed Forces Military Band at the Palace of Culture at 8:00 p.m. (The concert, held under Royal patronage, marks His Majesty King Hussein's birthday).
 - Classical music performance by Iraqi group Sonnet at Darat Al Fann, Jabel Amman at 7:00 p.m.
- LECTURE**
- "Rules and Methods of Preserving and Restoring Historical Monuments" by Dr. Helge Fischer at Goethe-Institut, Jabel Amman at 6:00 p.m.
- EXHIBITIONS**
- Display of Jordan River Foundation (JRF) 1998 autumn/winter collection titled "Falling Leaves" at the JRF showroom, Jabel Amman (Tel. 4613081), until Nov. 30.
 - Ceramics of Civilisations: More Than 100 Years of German Archaeological Activities in Jordan (sponsored by the German Protestant Institute in cooperation with Petra Stone Preservation) at the Royal Cultural Centre, until Nov. 24.
 - A three-dimensional exhibition on canvas by Susanna Caldwell, Darleen Karpowicz, and Rawabi, Abu Ghazaleh Silawi at the Jordan Arts and Crafts Centre (Artsana), Jabel Amman, of the Second Circle, until Nov. 20 (Tel. 4647855).
 - Exhibition of watercolours by Mukarram Haghoudoup at Insano Centre, Jabel Amman, until Nov. 24.
 - "Masterworks of the Spanish Contemporary Architecture and Presentation of Architecture Guide: Spain 1930 - 2000" at the University of Jordan, Faculty of Engineering, until Nov. 20.
 - Paintings by Jordanian artist Mohammad Abu Aziz at the French Cultural Centre, Jabel Amman, until Nov. 28.



U.N. relief staff wave Monday before their departure from Amman to Baghdad. Around 150 United Nations relief staff headed for Iraq yesterday to resume their work after the United States called off military strikes against Baghdad (Reuters photo)

U.N. relief staff return to Iraq from Jordan

By Dominic Evans
Reuters

AMMAN — Around 150 United Nations relief staff set off by road and air for Iraq on Monday, five days after being evacuated to avoid threatened Western air strikes.

"Baghdad here we come!" shouted a smiling worker as she boarded one of four buses travelling in convoy with seven U.N. cars on the 900-km journey to Baghdad.

About 120 relief staff were making the return journey by road, while a smaller group of 30 was flying from Amman to an airport west of Baghdad.

"We have received instructions from the U.N. to go back to Baghdad and we are doing that now," said Abdullah Odeh, a senior official based in the Iraqi capital.

"We will resume our humanitarian programmes and we hope these things did not affect our operations in Baghdad."

The humanitarian workers, who oversee sanctions-hit Iraq's distribution of food and medicine bought under its oil-for-food accord, were evacuated from Baghdad last week as

the United States and Britain threatened air strikes against Iraq.

President Saddam Hussein triggered the showdown by halting all cooperation with United Nations inspectors charged with scrapping Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

U.S. President Bill Clinton called off a planned aerial bombardment of Iraq after an 11th-hour Iraqi pledge to resume full cooperation with the inspectors, but warned that the United States would strike at the first sign of any Iraqi renegeing.

Odeh said some of the staff would be back at work early on Tuesday. He denied that the U.N. return was premature in view of the U.S. threat still hanging over Baghdad.

"We feel very good that we will be able to do our work. We are not concerned. Our management decides when it is safe for us to go back," he told Reuters.

The returning staff embraced a handful of Jordan-based U.N. workers, one of them carrying flowers, and waved as they left the courtyard of an Amman hotel where they had been staying since Thursday.

Those returning by bus face a lengthy road journey. When they left Iraq last week, it took them nearly 24 hours to reach the Jordanian capital from Baghdad.

The U.N. workers had prepared to head back to Iraq on Sunday but delayed their trip after the United States initially rejected Iraq's offer of compliance with the inspectors.

The inspectors themselves left Iraq last week for their field headquarters in the Gulf state of Bahrain. They were due to return on Tuesday to test Iraq's renewed offer of cooperation.

Commerce chamber holds elections today

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Members of the Amman Chamber of Commerce today will elect a new leadership in a heated competition between two major blocs of the 30,000-member organisation.

Members will cast their ballots for a 12-person board of directors among 28 candidates, whose programmes focus on restricting trade with Israel, reducing taxes and customs duties, and enhancing trade with the Iraqi and Palestinian markets.

Candidates' banners were hung in several parts of Amman, especially the downtown, a hub of trade activity.

"Our trade with Palestine and Iraq tops our agenda, and we will work hard to remove any barrier that impedes such trade," read one banner. "We should not allow Israeli traders to penetrate our economy," read another.

Candidates' programmes also call for a reduction of interest rates, more cooperation between the private sector and the government, health insurance for traders and enhancement of the chamber's role in the country's economy.

Some candidates have placed emphasis on the importance of the Kingdom's only port, Aqaba, to Jordan's imports and exports following news reports that the government was considering allowing merchants to use the Israeli port of Haifa for imports.

Observers say competition is mainly between the chamber's two major blocs, Al Wifaq [The Accord], headed by current board Chairperson Halidar Murad, and Al Ta'awun [Cooperation], headed by Riyad Saifi.

The candidates' list also includes four independent contenders: Walid Khatib, Mohammad Nizar Mifleh, Jamal Abu Samrah and Hamid Abdo.

Murad, who has led the chamber since 1990, declined to comment about his campaign or his prospects for re-election to another four-year term.

But Saifi said he believed that "traders will vote only for blocs and not independent candidates."

Saifi told the Jordan Times that his group will oppose any normalisation of ties with Israel.

"We believe that opening the gate to trade with Israel will destroy our economy," he said. The candidate said that the Iraqi and Palestinian markets are essential to the Jordanian economy and that more efforts should be exerted to open up those markets.

"Israel wants to maintain its domination on the Palestinian market, which ranks second to Israel in terms of trade volume after the United States," Saifi said.

Education Ministry continues programmes to reduce illiteracy rate to 10 per cent by 2000

By Susan Resheq

AMMAN — In the past few years, Jordan has lowered its illiteracy rate to 13 per cent and hopes to bring it down to 10 per cent by the turn of the century.

Today illiteracy among citizens 15-45 years of age is seven per cent, averaging eight per cent for women and six per cent for men, according to the director of general education at the Ministry of Education, Mahmoud Massad.

But the rate of illiteracy is higher in the 45-and-over age bracket, especially among women, Massad added.

In a bid to combat illiteracy in the Kingdom, several plans of action have been set in place.

Between 300-400 literacy and education classes operate in the Kingdom at any given time, based on demand.

Massad pointed out that the Ministry of Education has offered litera-

cy and adult education classes to more than 350,000 people since the programme started in the early 1960s. In order to eradicate illiteracy among young people, the ministry made education compulsory until the 10th grade.

Literacy and adult education centres work with groups of 10-15 people and provide basic education up to a level corresponding to the sixth grade.

In an interview with the Jordan Times, Massad said teachers at these centres are holders of bachelors and associate degrees, work full-time and attend special training courses annually or every other year.

Massad, however, was critical of the textbooks used in the courses, saying that they are "weak and in need of development." He said teachers could benefit from more training, but "the situation in general is not bad."

Massad indicated that the ministry is providing opportunities to stu-

dents who study in literacy centres to become integrated in the general education process.

Students who study in literacy and adult education centres are supposed to reach a sixth grade level in four years: the first four grades in two years, the fifth and sixth in the other two.

According to Massad, if these students want to continue their education, they are allowed to join educational centres offering evening or home classes and may eventually sit for the tawjihi.

"Many people followed this programme, passed tawjihi, and some even entered universities," Massad said.

The literacy centres usually function in government schools under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.

Since illiteracy rates differ in various governorates, the Ministry of Education pays particular attention to the areas most affected by

increasing the number of literacy and adult education centres in those regions lagging behind.

Students are provided with books and stationary, and when the ministry set up the school meals programme 10 years ago, adult and literacy education centres were also included.

But financial difficulties forced the ministry to phase out the programme between 1994-95. As a result, the number of learners in literacy centres declined, especially in poor areas.

Other plans have been devised to reach people not covered by traditional teaching methods, according to Massad. For example, literacy centres have been set up in prisons, where "there are many illiterate people," a reason Massad believed was sometimes behind their delinquency.

This year, the ministry began teaching several crafts at the centres to help attract more students.

Death toll in Rome building collapse rises

ROME (R) — At least 13 people died and about 20 were missing after a five-storey Rome apartment block collapsed early Wednesday as its occupants slept.

"There are 13 dead, 10 of them adults," Luigi Abete, head of the fire brigades squad at the scene, told reporters.

He said he held out little hope of any survivors being found, adding that he feared the final death toll could be between 30 and 35.

"Hope is the last thing to die but I don't think that we will find anybody alive," he said nearly 12 hours after the collapse of the building which was home to 16 families in the Italian capital's southwestern district of Portuense.

The collapse occurred at around 3 a.m. (0200 GMT) when most residents would have been in beds. It was first thought to have been caused by a gas explosion but fire chiefs said later that subsidence or structural faults were more likely to blame.

The block, built in the

1950s, also contained offices and had a print shop in the basement.

Abete said he believed rescue workers would have to dig for at least two more days before they reached the bottom of the rubble, which filled the building's basement and rose little more than a metre (three feet) above street level.

"What residents heard was a big thump, not an explosion, but something like distant thunder," Abete said.

Politicians and priests arrived to pay their respects. "This is an enormous, incomprehensible tragedy, especially coming in the period before Christmas," said Interior Minister Rosa Russo Jervolino.

Many relatives and friends converged on the scene, seeking news of victims. They were comforted by neighbours from three nearby blocks who were awakened by the noise and had joined in the frantic hunt for survivors.

"Which building is it? Where is it? Oh God, my sister is in there," cried one



Firefighters search through the debris of a five-storey apartment block that collapsed early Dec. 16 in Rome (AFP photo)

grief-stricken woman.

A young firefighter collapsed in shock when his parents and one of his brothers were found among the victims.

The dead were carried on stretchers to a nearby garage for identification.

During his weekly general audience at the Vatican, Pope John Paul said he was "deeply saddened" by the news and expressed his

condolences to the families of the victims. Italy's upper house of parliament held a minute's silence for the victims.

The Italian soccer federation said a minute's silence would be called ahead of an Italy vs. Rest of the World match at Rome's Olympic stadium at 9 p.m. (2000 GMT) Wednesday.

Fire service inspector general Salvatore Fiadini

said the building looked as if it had been swallowed up by the ground and the collapse could have been triggered by a landslide.

"I have never seen anything like this before because usually when a building collapses some part of the structure remains standing," he said. "This is a complete levelling."

"The surprising thing is that the volume of the rub-

ble is so low. So much has appeared to have gone underground," said civil protection chief Franco Barberi. "The chances of finding anyone alive is remote."

Some residents who have lived in the district for years said they had heard that the area had once been mined for a substance known as "pozzolana" — volcanic ash used in making cement.

Schroeder heads to eastern Germany to learn region's problems.

DRESDEN, Germany

(AP) — Chancellor Gerhard Schröder headed with most of his cabinet to the former Communist east Wednesday to show solidarity with the economically troubled region.

Since taking office in October, Schröder has been eager to dispel critics' charges that he had taken little interest in eastern Germany's problems — high unemployment tops the list — since unification in 1990.

Now he is launching a series of regular talks with eastern governors by meeting Saxony's Kurt Biedenkopf, whose area leads the four other eastern states in closing the economic gap with richer western Germany.

To add weight to the effort, most Cabinet mem-

bers are accompanying Schröder for the afternoon meeting in the state capital Dresden.

The chancellor promised in his inaugural address last month to hold special Cabinet sessions in the east every two months.

He has also appointed a minister for eastern German affairs, and has promised to continue massive doses of government aid.

Schröder's bid to reach out to eastern Germans, who make up about a fifth of the population, is part of a historic eastward shift of the nation's centre of gravity brought on by unification.

Next fall, with the government's move from Bonn in the west, Schröder will be governing a united Germany from Berlin for the first

time since the Nazi defeat in World War II.

Eastern Germans helped lift Schröder and his Social Democrats into power by turning against Helmut Kohl in September elections, their gratitude for the chancellor who unified Germany worn out.

But a poll published last week by the Leipziger Volkszeitung newspaper showed barely half of all easterners think the 7-week-old centre-left government is doing a good job.

Topics for Wednesday's talks include Saxony's economic situation and ways to put young people to work, the future of government aid to the east and the continuing cleanup of polluted industrial sites left over from Communist times.

Swiss president in Moscow for talks with Russian leaders

MOSCOW (AFP) — Swiss President Flavio Cotti arrived here Wednesday for meetings with top Russian officials, including President Boris Yeltsin and Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov.

Cotti, accompanied by his wife Renata, arrived from Saint Petersburg, where he had attended a roundtable of Swiss and Russian businessmen.

The Kremlin said Cotti would Thursday meet Yeltsin, who is making a slow recovery from a bout of pneumonia. Yeltsin, 67, returned to the Kremlin Tuesday from his country residence for a protocol meeting with foreign envoys.

The Russian leader was hospitalised on Nov. 22 and has been dogged by ill-health since undergoing a quintuple heart bypass operation in November 1996.

During the first day of his two-day visit, Cotti was

expected to give assurances that Swiss investors are still interested in the Russian market despite the current crisis.

As well as the president and premier, Cotti is to have talks with Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov, one of the most serious candidates for the presidential elections due in 2000.

In an interview with the newspaper Nezavisimaya Gazeta, Cotti said he did not expect immediate results from his visit, which was "rather aimed at creating a spirit of long-term cooperation and mutual trust."

"This trust already exists. And by saying this I particularly think of Yevgeny Primakov," he said.

"We have long worked together when we both were foreign ministers and I am very happy to see him again and discuss many things with him, including the big problems Russia is facing up to."

Cotti said he was satisfied with the state of cooperation between the two countries.

"We Swiss believe in Russia's huge economic potential," he said. "Our industries are definitely interested in the Russian market and they are currently among the principal investors in the world."

Cotti also expressed support for political, economic and social changes in Russia to strengthen democracy and the market economy.

There will be no large-scale security in Europe "if one of Europe's principal powers, Russia, is not involved in the process," he added.

Several documents are due to be signed during Cotti's visit, Interfax said.

According to Russian figures, Switzerland was the second biggest foreign investor in Russia after the United States in 1997, at \$1.32 billion.

Death toll from S. African storm put at 18

UMTATA, South Africa (R)

— The death toll from a freak tornado which tore through the southeastern South African town of Umtata during a visit by President Nelson Mandela has risen to 18, police said Wednesday.

Rescue workers discovered a body under rubble Wednesday and police spokesman Mzukifi Fatyela said two people died in Umtata General Hospital during the night from injuries suffered when the storm hit Tuesday afternoon.

He said 163 injured were being treated in the hospital.

Local reporter Stan Mzimba said the small farming town looked like a battle zone after the tornado swept through around 3 p.m. Tuesday.

"Half of the hospital's roof was blown off and the casualty department, intensive care unit and maternity ward are damaged," he told Reuters. He added that the injured were being treated in the undamaged section of the hospital.

Fatyela said initial estimates put the cost of the damage at more than one billion rand (\$165 million).

Presidential spokeswoman Priscilla Naidoo said Mandela, who is holidaying

at his birthplace in nearby Qunu, returned to the town Wednesday to view the damage. He had been at a pharmacy in Umtata when the tornado struck.

Witnesses said his bodyguards appeared confused by the noise and threw the 80-year-old president to the ground and lay on top of him until it was clear what was happening.

After that, Mandela was taken to a room in the store and later to the town's police station.

Local officials said Mandela was expected to visit the town again later Wednesday with provincial Premier Mkhensisi Stofile.

Seven street hawkers were killed when the wall of a store collapsed on them and others were killed by flying debris and by lightning.

Mzimba said municipal workers began clearing the rubble Wednesday, using forklift trucks and bulldozers. "It's quite calm now with people just passing by and stopping briefly, whereas yesterday the police struggled to control the crowd," he said.

He said police, soldiers and security guards were guarding the damaged stores. Four youths were arrested Wednesday for looting.

Lott could face tough choice with impeachment trial

WASHINGTON (AP) —

The growing possibility that the House will impeach President Bill Clinton means Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott may ultimately have to risk the wrath of conservatives and decide whether to short-circuit a Senate trial.

The Mississippi Republican has already said that should the House of Representatives vote to impeach Clinton, the Senate would hold a trial to decide whether he should be removed from office. The House impeachment vote is expected to occur soon.

A Senate trial would probably begin no earlier than January.

With Republicans holding a 55-45 edge in the Senate, it currently seems unlikely that there will be the constitutionally required two-thirds majority — 67 votes — to oust Clinton.

If Lott concludes that Clinton will not be convicted and if the trial threatens to last months and obscure the Republican legislative agenda, Republican leaders may have to decide whether to let the proceedings continue or pursue a lesser punishment like censure.

The peril for Lott is that he has already drawn the ire of conservatives several times in his two-and-a-half years as majority leader. Being blamed by them for letting Clinton slip off the Senate's hook could be a fatal blow to his ability to continue to lead Republican senators.

"The overwhelming consensus among conservatives is to not go for censure," said Tom Katina, executive director of the American Conservative Union.

"He's going to have a rebellion in his own caucus if he were to try to cut it short here. That didn't happen on the House side."

Conservative Sen. Jon Kyl, an Arizona Republican, said shortening the proceedings if the 67 votes fail to materialise is "a horrible idea."

"You don't decide that because trying people takes time and costs the citizenry money, you don't do it. There are very few things more important in this country than upholding the rule of law," he said.

Lott has said he believes a trial could last several days or weeks,

and Kyl agrees. But some members of both parties say it could last many months, thanks to the vagueness of the Senate's little-used impeachment rules.

Should that occur, some Republicans are sure to worry if their plans for tax cuts, Social Security, health care and education fade into the background. Last Election Day, many Republicans attributed their party's poor showing to their lack of a positive, assertive legislative message.

On the other hand, an impeachment trial need not drag on indefinitely. At any point, a senator can move that the trial be terminated. It would take only 51 votes — a simple majority — for that to occur. Some argue that if there are insufficient Senate votes for conviction, it would also be in the administration's interests for a quick trial and early vote.

Spokesman John Czwartacki said Lott will not comment further on a Senate trial until the House completes its work.

But Senate Majority Whip Don Nickles of Oklahoma, the Senate's

No. 2 Republican, said he has thought a lot about what to do if it becomes apparent that Clinton will not be convicted.

While declining to discuss specifics, he made clear that he believes a lengthy trial would not serve Republican purposes.

"You'd think the managers of the trial would think, 'Do we help ourselves by going on for three months or not?' It probably wouldn't," said Nickles, one of the Senate's leading conservatives, in an interview Tuesday.

But cutting a trial short would leave conservatives with feelings "that would range between ambivalence and fierce opposition," said Ralph Reed, the consultant and one-time executive director of the Christian Coalition.

Lott cannot afford that. His tenure as majority leader has already seen him clash occasionally with conservatives over issues ranging from his support of the administration's chemical weapons treaty to the \$520 billion, pork-filled spending bill Congress approved before adjourning in October.

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Australia combating racism'

CANBERRA (AFP) — An anti-racism campaign launched by the government in response to the rise of extremist groups had been a huge success, Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock said Wednesday. Ethnic groups had complained that Asians and Aborigines were being made scapegoats by Pauline Hanson and her far-right One Nation party and the government was not doing enough to help. But Ruddock told a Press Club function here that since the campaign was launched in July fears had diminished. "Earlier this year I embarked on an information campaign aimed at correcting some of the myths and misinformation surrounding the immigration debate," he said. "I took the campaign around the country to every state and territory. It was well received everywhere as a positive step towards rebutting the divisive and intolerant views then being propounded by a few prospective, and now failed, politicians." He called for Australians to join together on March 21 next year to celebrate "Harmony Day". "It will be an expression of community harmony and acceptance of our cultural diversity by the Australian people," he said. "There will always be people who will try to undermine the harmony of the Australian community, but they will not succeed because the Australian spirit has an instinct for acceptance and goodwill which has always survived, and which will take us confidently into the next century." One Nation scored eight percent of the vote, or one million people, in October elections but Hanson lost her Senate seat. The party won just one parliamentary seat.

Former Albanian president summoned on coup charge

TIRANA (AFP) — Former Albanian president Sali Berisha has been summoned by the Tirana district prosecutor to face indictment Friday over a bid by his supporters to overthrow the government, a statement by the prosecutor said Wednesday. Berisha, who heads the opposition Democratic party (PD), is accused of "fomenting a coup" on Sept. 14 in which four people were killed and 80 were injured in Tirana, when his supporters tried to storm the seat of government, prosecution spokesman Ardian Visha told reporters. Berisha condemned the procedure, describing it as an act of "revenge against the opposition." PD spokesman Arta Sakja said. The prosecutor has the right either to arrest Berisha or to leave him free until a possible trial, a legal expert who requested anonymity said. If the indictment for inciting a coup is sustained, the former Albanian president could face the death penalty. On Sept. 18, the Albanian parliament lifted Berisha's parliamentary immunity, paving the way for his arrest and prosecution on the charge of leading an attempted coup by inciting violent anti-government protests in Tirana. The anti-government violence erupted after the murder of a PD official and deputy, Azem Hajdari. Berisha and other PD officials have refused so far to attend court as witnesses for the assassination of Hajdari, who was killed by unknown gunmen on Sept. 12 in front of the PD offices. The party has called on its supporters to hold a protest demonstration in Tirana Thursday, against "political crime and terror committed by the (Socialist Party) regime against the opposition."

Le Pen purges rivals far-right

PARIS (R) — Embattled French far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen Wednesday purged 14 regional party leaders who sided with his rebel deputy Bruno Megret in a bid to oust him. The Front press office, firmly in the hands of Le Pen loyalists, issued a list of the sacked rebels and their replacements. Another party statement said the rebels' call for an extraordinary party congress, which could vote Le Pen out of his office as party chairman, was "a subversive operation which National Front members cannot accept." The Front split in two this month over preparations for next June's European Parliament elections, and latest public opinion surveys say its usual 15 per cent of the vote could be slashed in half because of the feud. Le Pen, who barred ringleaders of the rebellion from a party strategy session Monday, has declared them expelled from the anti-immigrant movement he founded 25 years ago. Among the regional leaders replaced were Serge Martinez, the first rebel to call for a congress, the Paris region leader Jean-Yves Le Gallou and Megret ally Frank Timmermans.

Chernobyl reactor shut down for repairs

KIEV (AP) — The only operational reactor at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant was shut for lengthy repairs that have been delayed because of energy shortages, officials said Wednesday. Reactor No. 3 was stopped late Tuesday and is expected to stay idle until Feb. 16, the state nuclear energy company Energoatom said. The repairs will include replacing some of the reactor's safety equipment and checking its other components to make sure the reactor can operate safely until April 1999, when it is to undergo additional repairs, a spokesman at Chernobyl said. Ukraine's nuclear authorities originally ordered the reactor shut for repairs by Dec. 1, but the Energy Ministry asked for a two-week delay, until another nuclear reactor was restarted, because it could not compensate for the energy loss otherwise. Two nuclear reactors were restarted this week, allowing energy officials to finally stop the Chernobyl reactor, where frequent malfunctions this year have again raised concerns over its safety. The reactor underwent major repairs between July 1997 and May 1998, but has been stopped many times since. Reactor No. 3 has been Chernobyl's only working reactor since 1996, and plans call for the plant to be shut down entirely by 2000. Another of Chernobyl's four Soviet-designed reactors was closed in 1996, the third has been inactive since a 1991 fire, and the fourth was destroyed in a 1986 explosion and fire, the world's worst nuclear accident. Ukraine has five nuclear power plants that account for more than 40 per cent of the country's electricity production.

China executes 7 for armed robbery

BEIJING (AP) — Authorities in southern Guangdong province have executed seven gang members who were convicted for dozens of armed robberies and possession of and trafficking in guns and ammunition, according to a report seen Wednesday in Beijing. The members of the gang were known as the "two gun, one axe" gang were executed Tuesday after Guangdong's highest court rejected their appeals, the local newspaper Yangcheng Evening News reported. It said the group's members were found guilty of killing three people and committing about 50 armed robberies or burglaries as well as trafficking in weapons. A court in Beijing, meanwhile, has sentenced to death a man convicted of selling heroin, the official newspaper China Daily reported Wednesday. Ma Yong, an unemployed man from Gansu province — a drug trafficking corridor in northwestern China — was caught selling 299 grammes of heroin in a Beijing park last May, the report said. The Beijing No. 1 Intermediate Court, which sentenced Ma Monday, also sentenced an accomplice, Yan Yiling, to life imprisonment. It said. The court also ordered the confiscation of all of Ma and Yan's property. The report said the two could appeal to a higher court within 10 days after the verdict. The severe sentences were cited as evidence of the government's determination to curb the fast-growing trade in illegal drugs.



New German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (right) and Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov smile as they pose for photographers before their talks. Schröder arrived in Moscow Monday for a two-day visit during which he is likely to shift the emphasis in relations with Russia away from President Boris Yeltsin (Reuters photo)

Schroeder arrives for first Moscow trip

MOSCOW (AFP) — Germany's newly-installed Chancellor Gerhard Schröder arrived in Moscow Monday for his first visit to Russia since taking office, saying mutual ties were set to enter a new phase.

Speaking on his arrival, Schröder also stressed the need for continuity in the Bonn-Moscow relationship. Interfax reported, building on close ties forged by his predecessor Helmut Kohl and Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

"These two elements will be respected in our bilateral relations," the German leader told reporters. Interfax news agency reported.

Schroeder got straight down to work, holding talks with Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov that were also attended by

Former defence minister speaks against Yeltsin at impeachment meeting

MOSCOW (AP) — A former Russian defence minister blamed President Boris Yeltsin Monday for the decline of Russia's military.

"I came to the conclusion that Yeltsin, as commander-in-chief of the armed forces, doesn't understand many issues relating to the national defence, doesn't want to understand them and isn't paying any attention to them at all," said former Defence Minister Igor Rodionov.

Rodionov was testifying before the parliamentary committee that is trying to impeach Yeltsin.

Impeachment supporters

Crusading S. African editor dies

PIETERMARITZBURG, South Africa (AP) — Laurence Gandar, a crusading editor of the 1960s who was one of the first prominent journalists to challenge apartheid, has died. He was 82.

Gandar died at an elderly care home after a long battle with Parkinson's disease, said Raymond Louw, a friend and Gandar's successor as editor of the now-defunct Rand Daily Mail.

Gandar took over as editor of the paper in 1957. It was one of the country's major dailies, and Gandar quickly made his imprint.

"He introduced investigative journalism to daily journalism in this country, and most of that was on the deprivation and other disadvantages the blacks were

Justice at last in case involving atrocities against Serbs

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — A U.N. tribunal Monday convicted three men of war crimes against Bosnian Serb prisoners in 1992, but acquitted their top commander in its first case to focus on anti-Serb atrocities.

The Yugoslav war crimes tribunal cleared Zeljko Delalic, a Muslim, of responsibility for war crimes committed against Serb captives at a Bosnian government-run prison camp under his command.

Prosecutor Grant Niemann of Australia said he would appeal Delalic's acquittal. Judges freed Delalic pending the outcome of the appeal.

"Let me thank you for a just and fair judgement," Delalic told the court. "I think it is a very wise judgement and a very courageous one ... the judgement has even increased my trust in this institution."

The tribunal convicted camp commander Zdravko Mucic, a Croat, of 11 war crimes and grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions because he oversaw guards who murdered nine Serbs and tortured six.

Mucic, wearing dark sunglasses and a cross on a chain around his neck, smiled as he heard his sentence of seven years in prison.

His conviction was the first by an international court on the basis of so-called "command responsibility" since post-World War II tribunals convicted Nazi and Japanese superiors for the crimes of their subordinates.

"Mr. Mucic was clearly derelict in his duty and allowed those under his authority to commit the most heinous of offences, without taking any disciplinary action," said presiding Judge Adolphus Karibi-Whyte of Nigeria.

Hazim Delic, a Muslim who served as Mucic's deputy, was found guilty of two murders and of raping two women as well as torturing other inmates. He was sentenced to 20 years by Karibi-Whyte, who denounced rape as "a despicable act which strikes at the very core of human dignity and physical integrity."

Esad Landzo, a Muslim guard, was convicted of three murders and the torture of at least three other inmates. He was jailed for 15 years.

All four defendants had faced up to life imprisonment, the maximum punishment at the tribunal, which has no death penalty.

Monday's verdicts ended a marathon 20-month trial that focused on the brutal mistreatment of the Bosnian Serbs, themselves blamed for the vast majority of war crimes committed during the 3 1/2-year Bosnian conflict.

During the trial — the tribunal's longest to date involving 122 witnesses — survivors described the campaign of terror unleashed against Serbs in the area.

Inmates at the Celebici prison camp were beaten to death by guards wielding baseball bats, wooden planks and rifle butts, according to testimony. Others were set on fire, raped and forced to commit sexual acts with members of their own family.

The 49-page indictment detailing atrocities at Celebici asserts that at least 14 prisoners were killed in 1992. One prisoner was beaten to death and had a Muslim party badge nailed to his head, a witness claimed.

Yet a few witnesses also praised Delalic and Mucic for humanitarian gestures, such as getting food and clothing to some prisoners and releasing others.

The tribunal, set up by the Security Council in 1993, has convicted only one other person following a trial — Bosnian Serb Dusan Tadic, who was sentenced in May 1997 to 20 years for killing and torturing Muslims in 1992.

Two other men have confessed to killing Muslims, handing the tribunal two more convictions while sparing it the need for trials.

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But of St said meeting

A headline earned recognition on page 3 reading "Society for physically challenged persons opens new headquarters" was inaccurate. The society is actually a support group for the parents and families of mentally and physically disabled children and adults. The group does not regret any of its past or

All of me, take all of me

By Eleanor Mills

WEEP NOT, all you well-covered women. Sophie Dahl, the famously voluptuous model and granddaughter of author Roald Dahl, may have lost two inches all over, but there is still lots of her left. In fact, contrary to recent reports that claim she has shrunk to the size of a wafer-thin waif, the girl I meet is, I am pleased to report, enormous.

At 6ft 3in in her Jimmy Choo shoes, Dahl is an Amazon. Plump, with glowing skin, curves and an exceedingly ample bosom, Sophie is constructed on a grand scale and towers over everyone else at the model agency. I over the scale — being somewhat Dahlesque myself, I'd been a little apprehensive about entering this-world-to-meet her, but as soon as she arrived, I felt unusually slyph-like.

She is not, however, fat. Though her arms are fleshy, the cellulite police will be pleased to hear that there are no excess rolls of fat. This is fortunate since she will be unveiled, naked, posing in a Victorian boudoir in Pirelli's 1999 calendar.

Having prepared for a snooty, vain model type, I find Dahl a pleasant surprise. "Oooh, I wouldn't touch my hair," she giggles to the photographer. "I put talcum powder in it 'cos it was so dirty and I woke up too late to wash it." (Dahl has a penchant for Kenneth Williams-style oooooohs — perhaps a genetic throwback to her father, Julian Holloway who was a Cary On actor).

Last year she was the fashion world's latest darling, bursting on the scene when she bared her ample size 14-16 frame in a skimpy crochet dress at London Fashion Week. Immediately, she was hailed as the high priestess of normal women — 47 per cent of British women are a size 16 or over — and became a role model for those of us with embonpoint, who are totally sick of only ever seeing photographs of sick-thin, anorexic-looking models.

Since then, despite being off the scale as far as the world of fashion is concerned (which just shows how mad it is) Dahl has

appeared on the pages of such skinny ghettos as Italian Vogue, Vanity Fair, Interview and Elle. Not bad for a girl aged 21 whose size would usually relegate her to "outsized" work — "kaftans and tents from Evans" as Dahl puts it scornfully.

But over the past few months, Britain's most pneumatic nymph has lost weight and the backlash began when she was snapped looking slim at a fast-pack party. Usually such transformations are greeted with raptures — but not this one: Dahl was accused of selling out. How would she answer her critics?

"I'd tell them to f*** off. I really would," she says in her Sloane Ranger baby voice. "It's my body. What is important is how I feel about myself."

Does that mean that she didn't feel happy about her Marilyn Monroe-esque frame after all? "No, I absolutely didn't think, 'I am really fat, I must get thinner,'" she says crossly, swigging cranberry juice.

"I haven't been dieting or purging or anything," she continues. (Of course not, Sophs!) "The weight loss came about because I was exhausted from working really hard and I heard about this great trainer who could boost your energy. And I was boxing with him and running, and I felt great, so I kept going."

And the desire to pound that trainer had nothing to do with those photo shoots where the clothes wouldn't fit? What about the time when the Gianfranco Ferré outfits had to be pinned together at the back? If I want to vanish through the floor with shame when I can't do the trousers up in a communal changing room, how embarrassed must she have felt in front of Karl Lagerfeld when none of his clothes would fit?

"At times it was humiliating. Yes," she admits, finally. "Being around models makes you much more aware of your body. If you've got a cluster of women who are being assessed constantly for the way they look, of course there's going to be neurosis about weight and eating. This world is hugely shallow. You go into a room and people look at your skin and go



Sophie Dahl, the granddaughter of author Roald Dahl, is literally the worlds biggest model — size 14-16 — and reacts badly to suggestions that she is slimming (file photo)

oooh when they prod your hips; you are like a prize piece of cattle — that's why I wouldn't want a child of mine to model."

She was not always a fatpuff. "I was 6ft and a size 10 rake until I grew at 17," she says. She can't, I hope, want to be that tiny again. "No," she says, looking down at her bust proudly. "I enjoy being womanly. Men adore it."

Men also adored her mother, Tessa Dahl, an extravagant socialite who gave birth to Sophie aged only 20 and had affairs with Peter Sellers and David Hem-

mings. Tessa's wild lifestyle was not, however, arrested by Sophie's arrival. Together, they wandered all over the globe through a whirligig of countries, lovers (Tessa later had several more children) and houses. Tessa "at least twice" flew the whole family — including Maureen, "our rock," the Scottish nanny — back to New York on Concord, "so we could get back to school on time from the ashram in India." And when she rowed with her lovers, she would spirit Sophie away in the middle of the night to Manhattan's Halcy-

on hotel, where they would hide for several weeks until she relocated.

"I used to say to Mum, 'I want a stable home,'" says Dahl. "She would say, 'Very well, darling. We'll buy you a stable.'" It became a family joke. With some of the money she has earned modelling — more than £100,000 last year — she has bought a cottage in Battersea. A stable of her own? "Yes," she says.

"My mother never does anything by halves," explains Dahl, who plans to write her autobiography soon. "But that is part of her charm — even when she is a bit mad — and she has suffered from depression throughout her life — she is very funny. All my friends longed for an amazing, wild mother like mine."

Some longed a little too literally. When Sophie was 17 and living at home with Tessa in Balham, her mother "went to bed with one of my male friends."

"To compound it, she told a newspaper all about it, which was devastating," says Sophie. After the piece appeared, Dahl was furious and did not speak to her mother "for a long time." "But, to be fair to Mum," she adds loyally, "she was having a huge nervous breakdown at the time and people took advantage of her, which was vile."

The rivalry between a beautiful mother and her daughter has rarely been so starkly revealed. "In a way," Sophie explains carefully, "I wasn't a child to my mother. We were so close in age that I was her confidante, and when I was 16, we became friends, which was where all the problems started. I needed her to be my mum, but we were going out to nightclubs, which was pretty confusing. I didn't go to school much, either. It was weird. I got jealous because my friends adored her. It caused huge friction." In a quiet voice she tells me how she saw a therapist to come to terms with it all. "It has been a very difficult and deeply painful time. Nobody will ever know how bad," she says sadly. "But my mother has had a very complicated life, a complicated childhood, a difficult father..."

Roald Dahl, author of such children's

favourites as *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *The Witches* and the script of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, was a famously tricky customer. "So talented," says Dahl, "but anyone who is that talented can be impossible." He died when Sophie was 13, and she misses him "terribly" — perhaps because he was the closest thing she had to a father. "Kids like him because he didn't patronise them. He'd talk about filthy teachers and grannies with mouths like dogs' bums." She had the benefit of his stories first hand. "I stayed with him a lot as a child. When I was about five, he told me and a friend about a big friendly giant who came to children's windows. (This was before he wrote *The BFG*). Then, in the middle of the night there was a big bang bang bang at the window and a loud 'ooooooooooh, wooooooooo, oooooooooo' and round the curtains came this old tortured face. It was my grandfather on a ladder, with a trumpet pretending to be the BFG. Mum was standing at the bottom going, 'Christ Dad, you're going to fall off.' Had he been on the whisky?"

"Probably," she says. "Or rather, too much red wine at dinner."

Alcohol was one of her mother's weaknesses, too, but Dahl claims she "did all that in her teens" and doesn't drink much or touch drugs herself. "Models don't take coke to stay thin," she explains. "It's just around; if you are in Milan and you are going to nightclubs with very rich playboys, you will be offered coke. I would rather go to bed." A rather unlikely comment from a girl who is often spotted at London's paparazzi-est hangout, the Met Bar. As we are about to leave, Dahl gives me a saucy grin. "You know what," she says. "Another reason why I've lost weight is because I'm in love. Lots of sex..." (She has a new boyfriend, a film production type). With that, she picks up her baby blue coat and puts on her hat. "Ooooooh," she giggles. "I suppose I shouldn't say that, my mother's going to read this." Somehow, I don't think she'd be shocked.

—The Sunday Times

Environment

Tougher climate talks to follow Buenos Aires

By Vicki Allen
Reuters

NEGOTIATORS WHO reached a deal early on Saturday to keep the Kyoto global warming treaty alive after two weeks of arduous talks face a much tougher task to make it work.

At the next big U.N. conference in 1999 when nations again will discuss the 1997 treaty forged in Kyoto, Japan, to stem heat-trapping pollution, issues that have divided rich and poor countries and also split the United States and the European Union will not be so easily papered over, experts said.

Delegates from some 170 nations at the U.N. climate conference in the Argentine capital finally achieved its key modest aim and set a deadline of late 2000 for agreeing on final details of mechanisms that industrial nations could use to keep the promise they made in Kyoto to cut their emissions of greenhouse gases.

The Kyoto agreement calls for industrial countries to slash emissions by 52 per cent below 1990 levels by 2008-2012 to try to slow the build-up of carbon gases that heat the atmosphere and change the world's climate.

Negotiations nearly collapsed when oil-producing nations who fear the treaty would slash their revenue threatened to walk out. Talks went until dawn on Saturday before an agreement was announced, after the OPEC countries found themselves outnumbered by other developing countries who wanted to get a

head start on their next big conference in late 1999, nations have to start coming to terms on broader disputes that they postponed in Buenos Aires.

Issues include differences between the United States and the EU over Washington's proposal to establish a system of trad-

ing in pollution allowances and other mechanisms that rich countries can buy to shift a share of their required emissions reductions to cash-hungry nations that pollute less.

Negotiators also will have to wrangle with the issue of whether developing countries, responsible for a growing share of emissions, should join industrialised countries in stemming pollution.

The United States, the world's leading polluter, insists that the developing world agree to curb its emissions growth before Washington ratifies the deal, a demand many poor countries reject.

Some environmentalists worry these issues could destroy the treaty, and urged the United States to back off those demands.

"Now we're moving toward the really crunchy issues of North-South, East-West relationships," Kirsty Hamilton of Greenpeace said.

The EU said it would press its effort to force rich countries to make most of their emissions cuts at home, while the United States wants no limits on the amount of cuts it can claim through buying allowances elsewhere.

The EU, backed by some environmentalists, criticised the United States for shifting the focus of the conference from the global warming threat to investment incentives and marketing pollution allowances that they said could help polluters.

"This is turning into a trade and economic negotiation — climate is getting pushed farther and farther down the agenda."

Science is being replaced by carbon trading as the driver for the talks, said Bill Hare, climate policy director for Greenpeace International.

But U.S. Under Secretary of State Stuart Eizenstat said the Buenos Aires meeting laid the ground-

work to resolve the disputes over developing countries and emissions trading needed to meet Kyoto's goals.

Eizenstat, who led the U.S. delegation here, said incentives for businesses to invest in clean technologies in poorer countries and the prospect for big emerging economies to trade emissions allowances helped weaken OPEC's hand among the so-called G-77 group of developing countries.

"Countries like Argentina began to take their own independent stance in what they considered to be their own national interest. That will occur more frequently," Eizenstat said.

Earlier in the week, host country Argentina said it would volunteer to set targets to curb its emissions so it can trade in the pollution allowances.

Eizenstat also said more European companies, along with U.S. companies, want to use the investment incentives and emissions-trading programmes that Washington proposed to use the marketplace to find the cheapest emissions cuts.

The Environmental Defence Fund, a green group that helped develop the United States' climate position, said the Buenos Aires agreement should produce rules to give countries and companies the "opportunity to make... reductions in the most cost-effective way possible and incentives to make them even faster than required." But Friends of the Earth International said the meeting accomplished little.

"There isn't even a timetable to agree on the huge list of things they couldn't decide on. Every year that they put off hard political decisions, dangerous climate change becomes an increasing inevitability," the group's spokesperson, Patrick Green, said.



Honduran refugees and their belongings in the search for a new start after Hurricane Mitch ravaged large parts of the country, and left thousands homeless (AFP photo)

Honduran vacation jewel now a desolate landscape

By Karen Lowe
Agence France Presse

SLICK BROCHURES showing coconut trees and bikini-clad women drinking margaritas around crystal waters offer a stark before and after picture of this tourist island now left barren by Hurricane Mitch.

For 36 hours, the hurricane hovered over this island, with 290-kilometre an hour winds that blew away one-third of the houses.

Dry, barren mountains are easily seen through trees that have been stripped bare of leaves. It looks like a fire engulfed the island.

Terri Zapata, 41, a lifelong resident taking a visitor on a tour seems like a housing developer showing a potential client where the school, houses and community centre will be built — only in reverse.

"That area where you can see the mountain used to be all houses. That was the school. That was a store. Fishing boats used to moor here," Zapata said, pointing to thin air. He fell silent as he surveyed the damage.

Indicating pilings sticking up through the water, he said there were houses attached to them before the powerful hurricane either swept them out to sea or slammed them against the shoreline, sometimes both.

"One house was picked up whole by

the winds and thrown into the ocean. There were people inside. They swam out through the windows," he said.

Fourteen of the island's 6,000 residents died in the worst hurricane to hit here since Fifi in 1974. Most residents believed this hurricane would be like others that sweep through annually, lurching down for only several hours and leaving little damage.

But some fishermen had been listening to radio reports and warned that Hurricane Mitch would be different. They prepared for the worst.

Royce McCoy, 35, has a 22-meter fishing boat and he thought the best chance for his family to survive the storm was to head out to sea with two other boats lashed together for stability and tethered to a piling.

He and the other two fishermen all had their families on board.

They decided that their wives and children would stay in the cabins of the boats while the fishermen outside braved the storm to make sure the ropes remained in place.

"We believed one or two of us would die in the storm, but we felt we had to be ready to make the sacrifice to save our families," said McCoy, who said the wind felt like it was sandblasting his skin.

The three families survived intact but his newly-built house was completely destroyed.

They heard by radio that the rope tether on a lone fishing boat snapped, McCoy said, and it was hauled out to sea where mammoth waves capsized the ship, killing the three people aboard.

Diana Smith, 51, who lives with her husband, a plastic surgeon, and another couple on their own tiny island heard the weather reports and believed this storm could be deadly.

So they gathered their three parrots and four dogs and headed for a three-meter by two-metre concrete shelter on Guanaja.

"The roaring, shrieking wind scared me to death. It didn't stop for 36 hours," she said. "I kept worrying about my friends who didn't seek shelter."

One family, she later learned had wrapped themselves in plastic and taken refuge in a ravine. They survived.

This hardy population has seen hurricanes come and go without devastating the island. Many heard radio warnings to evacuate to concrete buildings, but stubbornly stayed in their homes until winds ripped off roofs like so many candy wrappers.

When the storm passed and people emerged from their shelters, the scene was of complete destruction. The island was strewn with tangles of wood planks, zinc roofs and trash. In Mangrove Bay, only nine of 200 homes remained.

Children falling victim to infections

Agence France Presse

YOUNG CHILDREN are increasingly falling victim to infections in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch, the Honduran health minister said Sunday, amid growing fear of major epidemics in Central America.

The large quantities of stagnant water left by the disastrous floods provided ideal breeding grounds for malaria-carrying mosquitoes, said Health Minister Marco Rosa.

He said that in the slums around Tegucigalpa alone, some 50,000 children were exposed to malaria and many more were threatened across the country. He said children were the most threatened by potential epidemics and were increasingly falling victim to infections.

The main threat in the capital was a major lake that had formed from flood waters, which aid teams have not managed to drain so far. The minister said a major fumigation campaign would be launched in the coming days.

Health authorities in Honduras and Nicaragua, the worst hit by the hurricane, floods and landslides were on full alert amid growing fears that stagnant water and lack of adequate sanitation could trigger killer epidemics. Nicaragua Sunday launched a massive vaccination campaign targeting more than a million children and their mothers across the country.

Nicaragua reported four deaths and more than 40 suspected cases of leptospirosis, a bacteriological infection usually contracted by walking on damp, infected soil, or through food. It causes severe headaches, pains in the joints, diarrhoea, fever, and eventually, death.

Nicaragua also reported 31,888 cases of acute respiratory infections, 422 cases of diarrhoea and 150 cases of cholera, while Honduras recorded 858 cases of malaria, 53,617 cases of respiratory illnesses, 12,393 cases of gastro-intestinal ailments and two cases of cholera.

In Guatemala at least eight people had died of cholera since Thursday and 20 others were being treated for the disease, authorities said.

After the shock wore off, residents set about trying to rebuild Guanaja, one of the Bay Islands whose reefs are reputed to be among the most alluring in the world for divers and whose beauty and seclusion has attracted celebrities like Claudia Schiffer, Sylvester Stallone and the late Jacques Cousteau.

At Posada del Sol, a Skin Diver Magazine article on the wall dubbed this island "one of the finest intimate dive resorts in the Caribbean." Pictures featured abundant sea life including a grouper the size of a small pony.

Posada del Sol, once a pirate hideout, was part of the British Empire until 1859. Bay Island residents are predominantly English-speaking, black descendants fishermen from Jamaica and the Cayman Islands.

Guanaja has no roads or telephone lines. It has since become a refuge for about 400 Americans drawn by its sandy beaches dotted with palms, orange flowering Royal Poincynas and tranquil emerald green waters around reefs that plunge 300 metres down.

"Before the hurricane, this was one of the most beautiful places in the world," said Christina Candia, 24, who helps manage the inn and was overseeing about a dozen workers restoring it.

"There were palm trees and hummingbirds everywhere. It was a tropical paradise. It will be again."

Japan's premier unveils record stimulus package

en 40 per cent over the last year in constant terms, and are now on a par with prices in the 1970s. The fall in prices and in profits, according to specialists, is consequently expected to have severe repercussions on future investments in the oil sector.

Meanwhile, Washington is under pressure from lobbies such as USA Engage — which groups more than 500 firms, including oil companies — that want a lifting of sanctions against Iran to enable them to compete for that market against other foreign firms.

But Japan is now gripped by its worst post-war recession.

Obuchi's latest pledge is expected to bring a cut in the top rate of income tax from 65 to 50 per cent, and a reduction in corporate tax from 46.36 to 40 per cent.

In addition it includes a \$9 trillion yen programme to tackle the credit crunch.

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U.S. warns Asia it cannot just absorb imports

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — Turmoil-wracked Asian economies cannot expect to use the large United States market to export their way to recovery, U.S. Vice-President Al Gore warned Monday.

"I want to make one point crystal clear, the United States cannot be the importer of only resort," Gore told the APEC Business Summit on the eve of the summit Tuesday of the leaders of the 21-member Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum.

Gore, here to represent President Bill Clinton, said all developed countries — whether in Asia, Europe or the Americas — "must play a role, and keep tearing down trade barriers."

"In the end, in this global economy, protectionism will only protect us from prosperity itself," he said.

Gore said expanded trade was a cornerstone of economic recovery and "we must take great care to ensure that what began as a global financial crisis does not become a global trade crisis."

"I urge you to consider what has happened to Asian exports to America, they have gone up dramatically. And other major industrial economies have not absorbed nearly as much," he said.

Gore pointed out that shared global leadership was needed to tackle trade and other problems.

He said that one third of U.S. growth in the past five years had come from expanding trade with other countries.

It also includes 1.2 trillion yen in spending on housing investment, a one trillion yen unemployment relief programme and one trillion yen to help Asian nations by the currency crisis.

The government will also launch a 700 billion yen gift coupon scheme, under which children and the elderly will be eligible for free shopping vouchers in an attempt to revive growth.

But the premier gave no ground on the issue of consumption tax.

The government was widely credited with pushing Japan into recession when it raised the tax, a form of sales tax, from three to five per cent in April last year.

"It is difficult to cut the consumption tax," Okuda

model, who is also the representative of the Chamber of Industry, said that the institution has started its work in Amman two years ago, financing a number of projects and schemes that aimed at motivating the capabilities of the Jordanian labor and rehabilitating it to meet international changes. The director also stressed the financial support from the Government and the Jordanian businessmen for economic cooperation between Jordan and Germany, emphasizing the feasibility of setting up an industrial and productive zone and exporting the manufactured products to the Middle East. He said, stressing that that would have many benefits to both sides. He added that such industrial cooperation considered effective participation of Germany to support the Jordanian economy besides the aid that Germany can offer.

Asian farm products, and our farmers suffer. If Asian stock markets drop, American investors feel the tremors, and our families suffer," Gore said.

He also said that every APEC economy should do its part to open up its economy despite the tough financial environment in the region caused by rapid currency depreciations.

APEC ministers, after two days of talks on Sunday, were unable to adopt a firm package on early liberalisation in nine key sectors as part of their ambitious plan to free trade across the Pacific by 2020.

The ministers were instructed by their leaders in 1997 to set "detailed targets and timelines" for tariff cuts in the sectors worth over \$1.5 trillion under the Early Voluntary Sectoral Liberalisation (EVSL) scheme.

With Japan particularly refusing to agree to specific cuts in two sensitive sectors — fish and forestry products — a time table for economies to come on board the scheme could not be worked out.

The ministers then decided to conclude the agreement by the end of 1999 under the auspices of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Yosano said the country was aiming for one per cent growth in the year from April 1999.

That is well ahead of the predictions of most economists who forecast gross domestic product will shrink next year for the third straight year.

"The package makes it clear that measures will be taken to achieve a level of growth which can be recognised with confidence as a sign that the economy is clearly in the expansion phase in fiscal 1999 after two years of negative growth," he said in a statement.

"Today's decision is only the first step toward economic recovery," Yosano added.

He said a separate loan guarantee programme would be set up to help firms that are finding it hard to raise money from banks.

A 20 trillion yen guarantee fund would be set up for small firms, with a seven trillion yen fund for larger

SCORPIO (March 21 to April 19): The sun and moon are in the sign of Venus in Scorpio. The planet Saturn is in the sign of Scorpio. The planet Mars is in the sign of Aries. The planet Jupiter is in the sign of Cancer. The planet Uranus is in the sign of Taurus. The planet Neptune is in the sign of Pisces. The planet Pluto is in the sign of Scorpio. The planet Mercury is in the sign of Gemini. The planet Venus is in the sign of Taurus. The planet Mars is in the sign of Aries. The planet Jupiter is in the sign of Cancer. The planet Uranus is in the sign of Taurus. The planet Neptune is in the sign of Pisces. The planet Pluto is in the sign of Scorpio. The planet Mercury is in the sign of Gemini.

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 VAN NORTH AMERICA COMPANY DETROIT, MI

CALL TO TONIGHT
 SAY WHEN THEY
 MEET DO YOU
 TELL THEM

GROGGER

DON'T
 WAIT!
 UP!

FLAMINGO FINDS IT
 EASY TO SAY TO
 RIGHT THING THE
 HARD PART FOR
 HIM TO STOP THERE

app

NO FROM HOUSE TREATING, PEOPLE WILL THINK...

LIKE MAYBE A BICYCLE?

NO NOT A BICYCLE... MAYBE AN ORANGE OR A COOKIE...

A BICYCLE WOULD BE NICE...

YOU HAVE TO TAKE WHATEVER THEY GIVE YOU...

HOW DID I GET INVOLVED IN SOMETHING LIKE THIS?

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Jeff

THE UNEMPLOYED

OH, GOSH. HUNDREDS I GUESS!

AND YOU'VE BEEN FIRED FROM EVERY JOB YOU EVER HAD?

YESSIR, I HAVE!

WELL, THAT'S NOT VERY COMMENDABLE IS IT?

WELL, ONE THING, SIR, NOBODY CAN CALL ME A QUITTER!

DID YOU GET THE JOB?

NO, I WAS TOO HONEST.

© 1984 by Al Hirschfeld

THE BETTER HALF.

By Glasbergen

"Sometimes I just have water for lunch. When I have no energy, I do less work and make fewer mistakes."

JUMBLE.

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

FILOO	_ _ _ _ _
TAFAL	_ _ _ _ _
ALBBUE	_ _ _ _ _
GOULEY	_ _ _ _ _

Answer: IT WAS A _

(Answers tomorrow)

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by Henri Arnold and Hilda Augusten

I dare you **I'll wait 'til the tide comes in**

WHY THE CAGE-DEVIL DIDN'T DIVE FROM THE CLIFF.

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

C
A
G
E
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T

...ed August 22 to September 22, 2005 it is to learn (one of the best ways) with a talented expert. You also learn the most by watching and talking. Know what he or she is doing and make that happen.

Sept 23 to October 22)

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L.A.

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

German statistics on Jordanian exports clash with government data

**** WHEREAS JORDANIAN** statistics show that the Kingdom's exports to Germany have declined during the first six months of this year, German statistics indicate that Jordanian exports to the European country have increased by 35 per cent during the same period.

Describing the Jordanian statistics as not accurate, Marita Riedel, the representative of the German Federation of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Amman revealed that Jordanian exports went up from DM13 million during the first six months of 1996 to DM17 million during the first six months of this year. Riedel, who is also the federation's representative at the Amman Chamber of Industry, said the German institution has started its operations in Amman two years ago by launching a number of projects and initiatives that aimed at motivating the capabilities of the Jordanian market and rehabilitating it to cope with international changes through financial support from the German ministry of economic cooperation. "Jordan and Germany are now studying the feasibility of setting up joint industrial and productive projects and exporting the manufactured products to the Middle East," Riedel said stressing that that would achieve many benefits to both sides. She added that such industries are considered effective participation from Germany to support the Jordanian economy besides the advantages that Germany can benefit

from them.

Asked about the activities of the German federation in Jordan, Riedel said: "We have set up three directorates at our office at the Amman Chamber of Industry. The directorates cover the environment, industrial exhibitions and small as well as medium-size industries." She pointed out that the most important step now is to concentrate on the Internet and to try to link "our activities at the federation in the region through the Internet and to create a modern information network." This scheme, she explained, would develop the capabilities and skills of businessmen in Jordan and other countries through exchanging information on a wider scale and a higher speed and benefiting from the experiences and expertise of some of them.

"We have trained some businessmen on using the Internet in carrying out commercial activities, monitoring international economic developments and events as well as doing deals on the Internet," Riedel said. "The Amman branch would continue educating businessmen and providing the latest technologies in addition to facilitating contacts to international fairs in order to improve the competitive edge and productivity," she added.

Jordanian exports to Germany comprise Dead Sea products, clothes and cosmetics (Al Dustour).

Gold hugs \$295 pivot despite weaker dollar

LONDON (R) — Gold held fast near \$295.00 during quiet European trade on Monday, ignoring dollar weakness versus the yen in what bullion dealers described as technical and options-related trade.

London gold fixed lower at \$294.85 a troy ounce in the afternoon, down on the morning's \$295.35.

"I think there are a lot of people who want to see it remain in the \$292.00/\$298.00 range who are ignoring things that would move it out of that range," said one London dealer in reference to the weaker dollar.

"It looks like it wants to stay around here. The next six weeks will not see a lot of movement unless the currencies go wild," she added.

The dollar weakened through Monday as easing Gulf tensions prompted long liquidations and the market anticipated a U.S. interest rate cut later this week, currency dealers said.

"The market was longer than expected on the back of possible attacks on Iraq, and that's tailed off although the situation is not over yet," said Jeffrey Yu, senior dealer at Sanwa Bank Ltd. in New York.

Asian slump slashes world auto sales, more shakeups seen

SINGAPORE (AFP) — The slump of Asian economies will drag down world auto sales for several years and the number of manufacturers failing in the region could increase, experts on the industry said Monday.

But the long-term potential of the Asian car sector was viable, they said.

A conference organised here by the London-based Economist group was told that the market for motor vehicles in Asia was expected to fall by 37 per cent in 1998, and that this would mean the loss of sales of 2.1 million vehicles.

The region's own auto makers, particularly in South Korea, are expected to undergo a severe shake-out but over the long term, top global manufacturers still believe Asia offers greater potential than any other region.

"We remain bullish and committed to Asia. The best is still in front of Asia," General Motors Thailand president and executive director of the group's Southeast Asian and Indian regional operations, Ron Frizzel, said.

The managing director of Mercedes-Benz Asia, Peter

Honegg, said: "Our firm belief is that Asia will be back."

Conference co-chairman Graeme Maxton, Economist Intelligence Unit associate editor for automotive publications, said that "a full recovery will take four or five years, at best."

He said: "Asia is now just a market of three million to four million vehicles and will remain so for a few more years to come."

"With a market that size, the whole of Asia has the potential to create a mere three or four world-class manufacturers. Not the tens of producers that there are today."

Sharp currency depreciations began in Southeast Asia in mid-1997 but the effects of the turmoil on the auto industry were felt in earnest only this year as once high-growth economies plunged into recession.

Before the Asian crisis, the world market represented a total of just over 52 million vehicle sales from 1995 to 1997, Maxton said.

He said that world vehicle sales would fall by about six per cent this year mainly because of the problems in Asia but also owing in part to a reduction of sales

in South America, despite strong U.S. sales and a record year in Europe.

But sales are now softening in both developed markets, which would lead to a further world vehicle sales decline of seven per cent in 1999.

"This will mean that world truck and car sales will fall by 12 per cent in just under three years — the equivalent to the loss of the entire Japanese market. Although most markets are expected to recover after 2000, it will be 2003 before the 1997 sales volumes are repeated," Maxton said.

The chairman of Thailand's Sukosol and Mazda Co., Sukit Pachimsawat, said that there was "excessive growth" in the Thai auto market before the crisis, and that "I consider the crisis to be a blessing in disguise in the long-term."

Maxton said that "with far too much capacity everywhere in the world, factories will have to close in many places, at least for a while," and predicted a "buying frenzy" of auto manufacturers in the next 12 months.

"Much of the Korean industry will have to close or move into foreign hands. The smaller and weaker

companies in Asia are likely to seek out buyers," he said, predicting grim prospects for South Korea's fledgling Samsung Motors.

He said that the takeover of troubled Kia Motors by the Hyundai conglomerate "simply delayed the day of reckoning" in South Korea, where auto firms are hobbled by overcapacity and massive debts.

Maxton said that even in Europe, weaker companies would have to look for "partners or parents" and "there will be many more mergers and acquisitions along the lines of Daimler-Chrysler."

Daimler-Benz MG of Germany and U.S. number three Chrysler Corp. have merged to form a new global automotive force.

Maxton said that investments and interest in Asia by world auto manufacturers will fall as a result of the slowdown.

"Those that have invested in China, Thailand or India will suddenly find that they have many more things to worry about. Asia will fall further down the agendas of the board rooms of Detroit, Tokyo and Wolfsburg," he said, referring to the U.S., Japanese and European auto industry capitals.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19)

The sun and moon are in Scorpio, but Venus is going into Sagittarius. Scorpio is a dominant sign, preferring things to go exactly as planned. Sagittarius is a free spirit, and with Venus in Sagittarius, freedom will be very important in romantic relationships. If a decision or commitment is imminent, make sure it's one that gives you lots of breathing room.

Taurus: (April 20 to May 20) If things are not going the way you thought you wanted, and they haven't been for quite some time, take a look at the situation again. Maybe you're helping maintain something uncomfortable, just because it's familiar. This does happen, you know, and it's likely to be noticeable today.

Gemini: (May 21 to June 21) The lesson for today is taking care of others, and somebody in your life might come right out and remind you in no uncertain terms. If you've got children with Scorpio in their charts, you'll know it today. They want things just the way they want 'em, and no deviation will be allowed. It's almost not worth arguing about it.

Cancer: (June 22 to July 21) Your intuition is excellent right now, especially concerning romance. You should be able to tell for sure whether the person you're with is the one. The only problem: Both of you may want to be independent, and resist settling down, even if you've already settled down. Give each other room to breathe, and your commitment will last.

Leo: (July 22 to August 21) There's a strong pull today for you to stay home and take care of personal matters. One of your children may request that you do that, or perhaps your sweetheart wants your attention. Spend as much time at that sort of thing as you can. It'll be very good for all of you.

Virgo: (August 22 to September 22) You'll be amazed at how easy it is to learn. One of the best ways you learn is by working with a talented expert. You ask questions, of course, but you gain the most by watching and working with someone who really knows what he or she is doing. Go to the extra trouble to make that happen.

Libra: (September 23 to October 22) There's money coming

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

in, and tough decisions to be made. You often have trouble making up your mind, if you're like most Libras, but today, you'll be able to decide easily what needs to be done, especially in financial matters. Don't worry that you'll spend too much. If anything, you're more likely to gain than to lose in these transactions.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You're looking excellent today. You're under stress, too, so that's even more impressive. You may say something you hadn't expected, however. Be careful about that. There's a tendency to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, even to your disadvantage. Avoid a situation where spilling the beans could do damage.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Something that was supposed to be done by now is coming due. You want to comply, but you don't want to give up your freedom. Is there a conflict between what you want and what someone says you have to do? Getting some other folks on your side is not a bad idea. Maybe one of them ought to be an attorney.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Your team is red hot and determined to succeed. With your help, they will. They've got the energy and you've got the spark that will keep them going. They'll take and plan and plan. You go in there and light the fuse that gets them all activated. Watch out for the emotional shrapnel, however.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Looks like a strong authority figure has got you nailed down. You can't do much of anything except just go along with orders. Try not to complain too much about it. Your friends are going to have a little more time for you, and they'll understand what you're going through.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You've got travel on your mind, and you might be able to pull it off. You could start by learning a foreign language. A class would be an interesting environment right now. You might meet some people who would be good connections later, when you make your trip. Try something new today. It'll work out better than you imagined.

Birth Stone of November: Topaz — Tiger's Eye

Britain mounts trade drive in Arab World

LONDON (AFP) — Britain has announced a major trade initiative aimed at increasing commercial links with the Middle East and North Africa to be spear-headed by 60 trade delegations to the region next year.

Trade Minister Brian Wilson told the Arab British Chamber of Commerce: "I believe the region offers some of the most exciting and sustainable trade opportunities anywhere in the world."

He added that "in the coming financial year, the largest ever number of trade missions will set off for the region — sixty in total."

The trade department published trade figures between Britain and the Arab World. Total exports from the region totalled £6.69 billion (\$11 billion) in the year to September. Imports of British goods were worth £3.15 billion.

Lebanon businesses seek more Iraq trade

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanese businesses plan to triple the value of their trade with sanctions-hit Iraq next year despite a lack of diplomatic ties, a leading industrialist said Monday.

Jacques Sarraf, head of the private-sector Association of Lebanese Industrialists, told Reuters in an interview Lebanon should follow the example of Syria and Turkey, who have a thriving business with Iraq despite poor political ties.

"Lebanon used to export 20 per cent of its turnover to Iraq. It was a big market," Sarraf said. "Turkey and Syria don't have agreements with Iraq but they are trading. We should at least get a piece of this cake."

Lebanon, rebuilding its economy after the 1975-1990 civil war, cut diplomatic ties with Baghdad in 1994 after accusing its diplomats of killing an Iraqi opposition figure in Beirut.

Beirut now wants to expand trade with Baghdad under the United Nations' oil-for-food programme, which has eased the sanctions imposed on Iraq for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

In July, Lebanon signed a \$50 million economic cooperation agreement to export agricultural products and other materials to Baghdad. The nations also agreed in October to appoint non-diplomatic staff to handle trade matters.

Sarraf, who attended a recent trade fair in Baghdad, said Lebanese exports to Iraq were expected to rise to \$100 million next year from about \$31 million in 1998. In 1997, trade was valued at \$2 million.

"We are wondering why Turkey is allowed to send 30,000 trucks a month into Iraq when we are not allowed to do so. We've suffered a lot from the civil war," Sarraf said.

"We are exporting to Iraq via Amman and Syria. We hope to succeed also via the ferry service from Dubai," he added.

The ferry service, launched this month, runs between Dubai's Rashid Port and Umm Qasr in southern Iraq and provides an alternative to the gruelling 1,000-kilometre desert journey from Jordan — the only other route out of Baghdad. Flights

to Iraq are banned under the sanctions.

Forging closer ties with Iraq is part of a Lebanese drive to expand exports to revive the war-battered economy. Lebanon's 3.5 million people provide a limited consumer base, Sarraf said.

"We are trying to set up an Arab free market. Within two years, we will have an Arab market that will include 110 million people instead of about four million consumers," he added.

Lebanon has already signed trade deals with Syria and Egypt, which will become effective by the year 2000, and is negotiating another deal with Kuwait. Beirut is also discussing joining the World Trade Organization and a trade deal with the European Union.

Asked how Lebanese products could compete with less expensive goods from Syria and Egypt, Sarraf said: "We believe Lebanese products have a different target than the Egyptian or Syrian goods. There would be hard competition between these two countries. Our products are niche products."

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Graf outlasts Davenport to win Philadelphia title

PHILADELPHIA (AFP) — Steffi Graf will enter next week's Chase Championships on a roll after rallying to beat World No. 1 Lindsay Davenport Sunday in the final of the WTA Tour event here.

The German veteran notched her second straight tournament win by outlasting the top-seeded American 4-6, 6-3, 6-4.

"I'm right where I want to be," Graf said. "I didn't think I'd be here two weeks ago. Winning these last two tournaments shows I'm much further along than I thought I'd be."

Graf broke Davenport to go up 5-4 in the final set and served out the match as she claimed her 106th singles title — the most among active players — and third in only her 12th tournament of an injury-filled season. She earned \$79,000 for the victory.

Graf, 29, will face defending champion Jana Novotna of the Czech Republic in the first round at the season finale, which begins Monday in New York.

Graf, a five-time champion in the prestigious season-ending tournament, gained the final spot in the 16-woman field following Venus Williams' withdrawal on Thursday.

Since coming back from wrist surgery, Graf won in Leipzig last week, and with her victory Sunday, extended her winning streak to 10 matches heading into New York. Graf's other title this year came in August in New Haven, Connecticut.

For the second straight year, Davenport suffered a heartbreaking defeat in the Philly final, having lost to Martina Hingis in a third-set tiebreak last year.

"I think she's (Graf) been playing great since she's been back," Davenport said. "If she can stay injury-free next year, I think she can win Grand Slams and jump into the top five."



Steffi Graf

Davenport could have assured herself of finishing the year as the world's No. 1 player with a victory. She currently leads Hingis by 266 points in the WTA rankings.

If Davenport loses in the first round in New York, Hingis would have to win the title and accumulate enough bonus points during the week in order to regain the top spot.

Davenport, 22, fell to 3-7 lifetime against Graf. She had been bidding for a WTA Tour-leading seventh title this year and saw her seven-match winning streak come to an end.

Asian Games slashes ticket prices

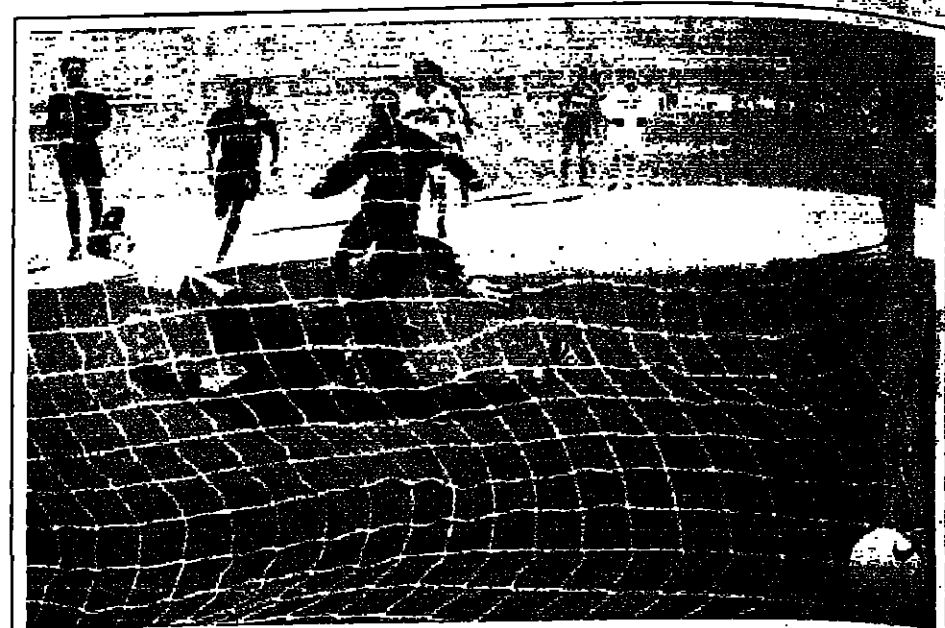
BANGKOK (AFP) — Asian Games organisers on Monday halved ticket prices for the opening and closing ceremonies of next month's event in Bangkok in a bid to spur sluggish sales.

"The current economic situation has affected ticket sales, so the decision to slash the price might help," said Jurin Laksanawisit, chairman of the Bangkok Asian Games Organizing Committee (BAGOC) executive board.

Jurin, a government minister, said it was difficult to say if all the tickets would be sold for the two ceremonies of the December 6-20 Games.

Mobile ticket stalls have been set up in Bangkok in an effort to boost sales which so far have only reached 60 million baht (\$1.6 million), well below the 250 million baht target.

The build-up to the Games has been plagued by problems including anxiety over facilities and dire predictions that competitors and officials will get stuck in Bangkok's notorious traffic jams.



French Youri Djorkaeff (C) of the Inter Milan team scores a penalty against Sampdoria Genoa during their Italian Serie A match in Milan. Inter won 3-0 (AFP photo)

Falcons swoop for division lead

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The Atlanta Falcons have landed among the National Football League elite.

After being told by coach Dan Reeves they would always be second-class citizens until they beat San Francisco, the Falcons rode the running of Jamal Anderson and an aggressive defense to a 31-19 victory over the 49ers before a sell-out crowd of 69,828 at the Georgia Dome.

Atlanta took sole possession of first place in the NFC West, one game ahead of the Niners.

The last time the Falcons were alone in first place this late in the season was back in 1980, when they won the only division title in the franchise's 33-year history.

Anderson rushed for 100 yards and two scores and the Falcons sacked Steve Young four times and forced two turnovers, including a one-yard fumble return for a touchdown by linebacker Jessie Tuggle.

The 49ers charged back with two long touchdown catches by Terrell Owens and Jerry Rice. But with just over three minutes left, the Falcons scored with a 78-yard bomb to lock up the game.

"Atlanta defended us very well, almost to the point of frustration," Young said. "I had a lack of patience. You have to give them credit. We had opportunities."

The Arizona Cardinals, another club making an unaccustomed November

bid for their division lead, couldn't quite pull it off against Dallas.

The Cards, who have not been to the playoffs since the strike-shortened 1982 season and last won a division title back in 1975, fell 35-28, but not until the final play.

Jake Plummer made the Cowboys sweat, passing for an NFL season-high 465 yards and three touchdowns as he rallied the Cardinals from a 28-point deficit.

Plummer drove the Cardinals deep into Dallas territory with a long pass to Rob Moore, which placed the ball at the Cowboys five with nine seconds remaining. After an incompletion, Plummer lofted a pass into the right corner of the end zone, which Moore and Dallas cornerback Kevin Smith leaped for simultaneously.

The ball fell to the ground as Smith appeared to interfere with Moore on the play, but no flag was thrown and the Cowboys emerged with their 16th win in 17 games against the Cardinals and kept sole possession of the NFC East lead.

The controversial no-call couldn't overshadow the performance of Emmitt Smith, who rushed for 118 yards and three scores, moving into third place on the all-time touchdowns list with 127.

In Oakland, Greg Davis kicked a 37-yard field goal with 21 seconds left to lift the Raiders past the Seattle

Seahawks 20-17, in a matchup of teams jockeying for AFC wild-card position.

The Raiders improved to 7-3 and now own the best record among AFC second-place teams. They trail AFC West leaders Denver — who try to maintain their status as the league's only unbeaten team at Kansas City on Monday.

The Miami Dolphins took sole possession of first in the AFC East with a 13-9 victory over Carolina. Buffalo and the New York Jets shared second behind Miami. Buffalo after a 13-10 win over New England and the Jets after a 24-21 loss to division stragglers Indianapolis.

The Jacksonville Jaguars rallied to beat Tampa Bay 29-24 and stretch their AFC Central lead to two games over Pittsburgh, who fell 23-14 to Tennessee.

Quarterback Kerry Cunningham bounced back from arthroscopic knee surgery six days earlier to lead Minnesota to a 24-3 win over Cincinnati as the Vikings kept control of the NFC Central ahead of Green Bay.

The Packers rebounded from a defeat on Monday with their biggest road victory in 36 years: 37-3 over the New York Giants.

In other games, New Orleans beat St. Louis 24-3, Philadelphia 28-3 and San Diego edged Baltimore 14-13.

Martin whips Johansson to take Stockholm title

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — Todd Martin took full advantage of a nervous seventh seed Thomas Johansson here on Sunday to defeat the Swede in the final of the \$825,000 Stockholm Open 6-3, 6-4, 6-4.

Martin, whose only other title of this year came on clay last April in Barcelona, prevented Johansson from claiming a fourth consecutive title for Sweden in the event.

Thomas Enqvist won here in 1995 and 1996 and was followed in 1997 by Jonas Bjorkman.

Martin was injured for much of 1997 and underwent elbow surgery which forced him to miss seven months of competition.

But the 28-year-old American, a losing finalist against Enqvist two years ago, raised his game enough to take the victory in what was a low-standard final.

"This is only my second final of the year and I wasn't sure about how I would do," Martin said.

"I was worried that it might end up as it did in 1996. I don't think either of us played our best tennis. But I started and ended each set well," he added.



Todd Martin of the U.S. hits a forehand return to Sweden's Thomas Johansson during the final of the Stockholm Open tennis tournament. Martin won 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 (AFP photo)

Martin, who will move from 21 in the world into the top 20 on Monday, got into a winning position with a break of Johansson for 5-4 in the third set on an overhead smash.

The unseeded American clinched his seventh ATP title when Johansson sent a return long in the next game to round off the final in one hour 50 minutes.

"It was a strange match. I started well, he started poorly. I could tell he was nervous, and that made me nervous. That's why there were five breaks of serve in the first set and three each in the second and third."

The American said that his game began turning around last week in Paris when he recovered to beat Holland's Paul Haarhuis. He then went on to oust Andre Agassi and Pat Rafter, both of them Top 5 players.

"It's the end of the year and I'm fresh mentally," said Martin. "But it all changed in Paris, before that, I wasn't. Here, before I knew I was in the semi-finals with chance to win event. That makes you a lot fresher."

Martin, who now owns seven titles, added: "Compared to Pete (Sampras) and the others, they've been competing for titles all year long. Ironically, my lack of success throughout the year has helped at the end of year, maybe there is more fuel in my tank."

Johansson's frustration with his game was evident early on as the Swede managed to hold serve

only once in an opening set dominated by breaks of serve.

While Martin was almost equally off-form, the American still won the first set 6-3. The two-time Wimbledon semi-finalist started the second set with a break to lead 2-0.

Johansson finally steadied himself enough to hold, only the second time in the match he had managed up to that point but Martin took a 3-1 lead with his seventh ace.

The 23-year-old Swede then won three games in a row to lead 4-3 but Martin drawing on his greater experience broke for 5-4 and served out successfully to take the set.

Johansson said that he wished he could have performed better at home.

"I had a good week, but it's too bad I couldn't play better in the final," said the disappointed Swede. "This was by far my worst match of the week."

"I'm satisfied with the week, but I'm sure the crowd would have liked to have had four sets in the final instead of just three. I have a lot of work to do on my game for next season."



Tang Gonghong of China in action to win the overall gold of the women's +75 kg category at the Weightlifting World Championships in Lahti (AFP photo)

CINEMA	PHILADELPHIA '1'	PHILADELPHIA '2'	PLAZA	CONCORD	GALLERIA 1	GALLERIA 2	Hisham Yanes Theatre
	Lawrence Fishburne & Sam Neill .. in	Julia Roberts & Richard Gere .. in	Comedian Mohammad Huneidi .. in	CONCORD '1'	ABDOUN	ABDOUN	Watch out for the new play
	EVENT HORIZON	PRETTY WOMAN	SAEEDI AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY	DEEP IMPACT	Antonio Banderas .. in	Comedian Mohammad Huneidi .. in	
	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30	THE MASK OF ZORRO	SAEEDI AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY	
				CONCORD '2'	Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	
				MORTAL COMBAT			
				Shows: 3:30, 5:30			

Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

Sports

LOCAL SPORTS



Bridge festival opens

AN — The Jordan Bridge Festival, an international annual bridge tournament, will be held in Amman from November 18-20. The festival is open to all bridge players from all over the world. The festival is organized by the Jordan Bridge Association and the Jordan Bridge Federation.

Jordan wins 4 medals

AN — Jordan's female champion, Huda Al-Masri, won a silver medal in the 48 kg category at the 1998 World Judo Championships in Seoul, South Korea. She also won a bronze medal in the 52 kg category.

Tennis team arrive

AN — The Jordan tennis team, led by coach Huda Al-Masri, arrived in Amman on Monday for the 1998 Jordan Open tennis tournament. The team will compete in the singles and doubles events. The tournament is organized by the Jordan Tennis Association.

Swimming team leaves

AN — The Jordan swimming team, led by coach Huda Al-Masri, left Amman on Monday for the 1998 Jordan Open swimming tournament. The team will compete in the 50m, 100m, 200m, 400m, 800m, 1600m, 3200m, 6400m, 12800m, 25600m, 51200m, 102400m, 204800m, 409600m, 819200m, 1638400m, 3276800m, 6553600m, 13107200m, 26214400m, 52428800m, 104857600m, 209715200m, 419430400m, 838860800m, 1677721600m, 3355443200m, 6710886400m, 13421772800m, 26843545600m, 53687091200m, 107374182400m, 214748364800m, 429496729600m, 858993459200m, 1717986918400m, 3435973836800m, 6871947673600m, 13743895347200m, 27487790694400m, 54975581388800m, 109951162777600m, 219902325555200m, 439804651110400m, 879609302220800m, 1759218604441600m, 3518437208883200m, 7036874417766400m, 14073748835532800m, 28147497671065600m, 56294995342131200m, 112589990684262400m, 225179981368524800m, 450359962737049600m, 900719925474099200m, 1801439850948198400m, 3602879701896396800m, 7205759403792793600m, 14411518807585587200m, 28823037615171174400m, 57646075230342348800m, 115292150460684697600m, 230584300921369395200m, 461168601842738790400m, 922337203685477580800m, 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LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



Bridge festival opens today

AMMAN — The Jordan Bridge Federation will host the international annual bridge festival starting Tuesday with the participation of 14 Arab and European countries. Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Tunisia, Great Britain, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus and Greece are competing in the five-day event.

Jordan wins 4 medals in karate

AMMAN — Jordan's karate champion Shadi Najjar and Saed Macin won three silver medals at the Cyprus International Karate Championship. Teammate Hamid Masoud won the Championship's heavyweight bronze.

Iraqi tennis team arrives

AMMAN — Iraq's national tennis team arrived here Monday for a five-day visit to hold friendly matches with Jordan tennis team which includes Dina Nafa'a, Rawand Azzouni, Faris Azzouni, Laith Azzouni, Ahmad Hadid, Yazid Nuseirat, and Tareq Talal.

Shooting team leaves for Qatar

AMMAN — The Kingdom's shooting team has arrived in the Qatari capital of Doha to participate in the 4th Arab Shooting Championship. The team consists of Khaled Khalifah as head of the delegation, and players Raed Ibrahim, Abdullah Faleh, Mufid Saleh, Fawwaz Hazza' and Hisham Mohamad. Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Sudan and Qatar are participating.

Compiled by Ahmad Khatib

Fiorentina lose UEFA Cup appeal

GENEVA (AFP) — UEFA, European football's ruling body, rejected Serie A leaders Fiorentina's appeal against their exclusion from this season's UEFA Cup here on Sunday.

Fiorentina, who won the second round, first leg encounter 2-0 at Zurich Grasshopper, were leading 2-1 at home in Salerno on November 3 when a firework was thrown on to the pitch, injuring fourth official Philippe Flament of Belgium who was treated for shock.

"The security measures taken were not good enough and added to the club's prior bad record and the seriousness of the incident their appeal has been rejected," a UEFA spokesperson said.

"We did take into consideration that the incident was intended to hurt Fiorentina and that is why we have not banned them from future competitions," the spokesperson added.

UEFA's ruling means that Grasshopper will go into the third round to take on Bordeaux, with the first leg in Switzerland on November 24. The Italians based their appeal on the fact that the firework had not been thrown by one of their fans but by a Salernitana supporter.



Mustafa Hassanein

Hassanein wins world title

By a Staff Reporter

JORDAN'S BODYBUILDING champion Mustafa Hassanein won the 52nd World Championship which was held in the Turkish city of Izmir with 72 countries taking part.

Hassanein dedicated his win to His Majesty King Hussein on his 63rd birthday.

Meanwhile, the International Body Building Federation (IBBF) Sunday elected Abdul Mun'em Abu Touq, the president of the Jordan Body Building Federation, as deputy chairman of the IBBF's Middle East Zone for the next four years.

Chase is on for No. 1 in women's tennis

NEW YORK (AP) — Besides the season-ending title and a pot of money, there will be a little extra on the plate at this week's Chase Championships: the No. 1 ranking.

American Lindsay Davenport, the U.S. Open champion who is ranked No. 1, will be among the 16 women at Madison Square Garden. As will Swiss Martina Hingis, the Open winner who lost the top ranking on Oct. 12.

"Getting to No. 1 was such a huge step in my career after winning the U.S. Open," Davenport said. "To try and finish the year No. 1 would be amazing."

Others will be aiming at different targets in a tournament Czech Jana Novotna calls a "fifth Grand Slam." The winner's check is \$500,000.

The Championships begin Monday and conclude next Sunday with a best-of-5 sets final, the only time during the year women play more than three sets.

"Staying at No. 1 is probably going to be the hardest thing that I've ever tried to do in my tennis career," Davenport said. "But I'm going to try. Once you get to No. 1, I'm definitely not satisfied and giving up now. I'm going to try even harder to try and stay there, try and make the most of everything that I've been able to do the last year."

"It's tough. I mean, everyone is gunning for you, you're never supposed to lose, you're always the favorite. You kind of have to deal with that kind of pressure in a different way."

Standing in Davenport's way could be Steffi Graf, who has been unbeatable since undergoing wrist surgery after the U.S. Open.

Graf has won her last two tournaments, including Sunday, when she defeated Davenport 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 in the Advanta Championships title match.

"I'm right where I want to be," Graf said in Philadelphia. "I didn't think I'd be

here two weeks ago. Winning these last two tournaments shows I'm much further along than I thought I'd be."

Davenport, who dominated the WTA Tour this summer, will begin by facing Frenchwoman Sandrine Testud in their opening match on the carpet.

Testud rarely wins tournaments yet remains dangerous, especially against Davenport. The American holds a 6-2 edge but Testud won the last time in Germany last month. They split their last four matches.

"You definitely have to be ready for the first match," Davenport said. "You're not going to get a qualifier. You can't really work your way into the tournament."

"That's a difficult thing because whoever you play is going to be in the top 16 and one of the best players in the world."

At the same time, you kind of look at it like there's not too much pressure. I mean, you can't really have a bad loss here."

In one of the most open years in women's tennis, Hingis was the only woman to play in more than one of the four Grand Slam tournament finals. She lost to Davenport in the U.S. Open.

Also in contention for the Chase title are French Open champion Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario of Spain and runner-up Monica Seles of the United States; Wimbledon winner Novotna and runner-up Nathalie Tauziat of France and Australian Open runner-up Conchita Martinez of Spain.

"It's great for women's tennis; it's great for the players," Novotna, the defending champion, said of the strong competition. "There was a period

when a player dominated — Steffi, Monica, Martina Navratilova, Chris Evert — when they won everything. Now it's wide open. Anybody can win any tournament. Anyone can win a Grand Slam."

Novotna could face a roadblock when she begins her title defense. She plays Graf, who after two years of injuries and surgery is beginning to show the game that once made her No. 1.

"The minute Steffi got injured and she couldn't play for two years, I went and won all the tournaments that I couldn't win in 10 years while I was competing with her," Novotna said. "Now she's back and I have to play her in the first round. It's just like a destiny, really."

Hingis will find a familiar face in the first round — Swiss Fed Cup teammate Patty Schnyder, making her first Championships appearance.

In other opening matches, it's Sanchez-Vicario vs. Irina Spirela of Romania, Seles vs. Anna Kournikova of Russia, Frenchwoman Mary Pierce vs. Amanda Coetzer of South Africa, Martinez vs. Dominique van Roost of Belgium and Tauziat vs. Natasha Zvereva of Russia.

"Everyone has earned their place here, everyone is extremely good," said Davenport, who is playing in her fifth consecutive Championships.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Holland loses star trio

THE HAGUE (AFP) — Dutch coach Frank Rijkaard suffered a triple injury blow on Monday just 48 hours ahead of his side's friendly with Germany. The 35-year-old Rijkaard, in charge since August, lost World Cup stars Dennis Bergkamp (back), Edgar Davids (Achilles tendon) and Aron Winter (groin) through injury. Moroccan-born Dries Boussatta, who was watched playing for his club Alkmaar on Saturday by Morocco's coach Henri Michel, replaces Bergkamp. The 25-year-old Boussatta was flattered by Morocco's interest but said: "It wasn't a difficult choice. Obviously I decided to choose the Dutch." Rijkaard, chosen as Dutch coach despite never having been in charge of a club side, also called up Feyenoord's twice-capped Jean-Paul van Gastel and Glasgow Rangers' Giovanni van Bronckhorst, who has seven caps.

Sydney Games to boost tourism earnings

SYDNEY (AFP) — A million and a half extra visitors will come to Australia between 1997 and 2004 because of the 2000 Sydney Olympics, the government's Tourism Forecasting Council said Monday. They would bring an additional A\$6.1 billion (\$3.7 billion) in earnings and create 150,000 jobs. The report said New South Wales would be the main beneficiary, but 50 per cent of the extra tourists would visit Queensland, 25 per cent would visit Victoria, 13 per cent would visit Western Australia and nine per cent would visit the Northern Territory. "Clearly the Olympic Games present an unprecedented opportunity to show the world what this country has to offer," Sport and Tourism Minister Jackie Kelly said.

McMenemy calls reserves

BELFAST (AFP) — Northern Ireland coach Lawrie McMenemy on Monday called up Under-21 captain Danny Griffin ahead of Wednesday's Euro 2000 Group 3 qualifier with Moldova after injury forced out three of his first choice players. The 21-year-old St Johnstone defender, who has won seven full caps but has played for the Under-21 side in their European championship qualifiers, comes in because Kevin Horlock, George O'Boyle and Jim Whitley have all pulled out. McMenemy, who was assistant to Graham Taylor during his ill-starred reign as England coach, also called up striker Phil Gray, Northern Ireland, who have failed to qualify for any finals since the 1986 World Cup, could join joint leaders Finland and Turkey on six points if they beat the Moldovans.

Australian treasurer to decide on Olympic tax

SYDNEY (AFP) — Australian Treasurer Peter Costello will have the final say on whether the 2000 Sydney Olympics have to pay a new tax that organisers claim could cost them A\$200 million (\$120 million). Sports Minister Jackie Kelly said Monday Costello had taken over negotiations with Olympic organisers over the introduction of the 10 per cent Goods and Services Tax. The Sydney Organising

Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) has been demanding an exemption from GST because it is a substitute for sales tax, from which SOCOG is currently exempt. It has forecast a \$200 million budget blowout if the government refuses. "When it comes to the detailed taxation issues in terms of transition issues, a lot of what SOCOG is demanding also affects other industries," Kelly said. "You've got the Australian Open and Opera tickets and a lot of other industries which are also pre-selling, so I think it's most appropriate that he (Costello) gets a coherent industry-wide coverage of that issue and he is the person that can do that." Costello said earlier this month that SOCOG would have to play by the same tax rules as everyone else.

Brunei wants to pull footballers from Asiad

BANGKOK (AFP) — Brunei has asked permission to withdraw its football team from next month's Asian Games here, organisers said Monday. Brunei officials said there were problems with the team but didn't give further details. Sports Authority of Thailand (SAT) Governor Sakchye Tapsuwan said, Thailand has asked the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) to negotiate with Brunei to keep the team in the December 6-20 Games as their withdrawal would cause problems in the draw for the football event, the SAT governor said. "I hope we will receive the answer from Brunei in the next few days," he added.

McEnroe, Forget in final

ZAGREB, Croatia (AP) — John McEnroe beat Mats Wilander of Sweden 6-0, 6-2 Sunday to reach the final of an ATP senior tournament in which Iranian Mansour Bahrami provided some humorous moments. Bahrami lost to Bjorn Borg 6-3, 6-4. On one point, when he couldn't reach a Borg serve, he took another ball from his pocket and "returned" it. Later, they staged a mock fight in front of the refrigerator over who would take the drinks first. The argument ended when Borg jokingly threw Bahrami into the refrigerator. Borg will play for third place in this robin-round tournament against Frenchman Henri Leconte, a 6-2, 6-3 winner over Guillermo Vilas of Argentina. Guy Forget of France will face McEnroe in Monday's final, even though he lost to Croatia's Goran Prpic 2-6, 6-4, 10-5. That's because Forget's overall results in the Croatia Classics tournament were better than Prpic's.

Clavet takes Chevrolet Cup

SANTIAGO (R) — Spain's Francisco Clavet out-rallied Moroccan Younes El Aynaoui on Sunday to win the \$315,000 Chevrolet Cup in the Chilean capital. The tournament received a lot of attention this year as world number two Marcelo Rios could have topped Pete Sampras from the top spot had he taken title. However the Chilean was beaten in the quarter-finals to unheralded Costa Rican Juan Antonio Marin. World No. 32 Clavet, seeded five, won the claycourt title 6-2 6-4.

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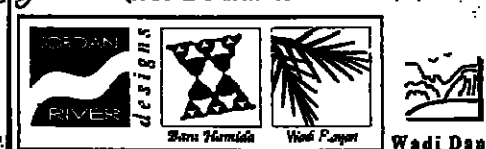
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Opposition considering pressing charges against government for barring activists from leaving for Damascus meeting

By Caroline Faraj

AMMAN — The opposition is considering pressing charges against the government after it barred political activists from leaving for Damascus to attend a conference organised by Palestinian groups protesting the recent amendment to the Palestinian National Charter.

The higher coordination committee for 13 opposition political parties had asked its legal committee Monday to study the possibility of filing a lawsuit against the government, as well as the interior minister for that action.

According to Salem Nahhas, secretary general of the leftist party, Hashd who chairs a committee representing the 13 parties, "we are consulting with our legal committee whether to file a

lawsuit or not within the coming week."

In a statement issued this week, the higher coordination committee described the government decision to ban citizens from travelling to Syria as "a violation of human rights and law and also the Constitution which stipulates that every Jordanian has the right to travel."

On Friday police barred a group of 32 persons, which included members of leftist, Pan-Arabist and Islamic parties, from leaving the Kingdom to attend a two-day meeting in Damascus that began Saturday.

Interior Minister Nayef Qadi stressed yesterday that the opposition has the right to file a lawsuit against him and the government.

"If the opposition are

intending to file a lawsuit against the government and myself, I believe that they have the right to do so," Qadi told the Jordan Times Wednesday.

"The opposition has the right to express their views freely in Jordan," he added. The minister reiterated the government's position that the decision to bar 32 persons from travelling to Damascus "came after having information that these persons will take part in a conference whose general objectives are levelled against Jordan, its policies and interests."

He also stressed that the government believes such participation could harm "the Kingdom's relations with some countries."

"All Jordanians are allowed to travel to any place they wish," according to the law.

Qadi said, "But if we have information that a particular person's travel will endanger Jordan's interests and its relations with some countries, we will never hesitate to (bar him/her from travelling)," the minister said.

The opposition parties are also urging the government to release from detention seven persons who were members of the delegation that was barred on Friday from travelling to Syria to attend the conference.

However, Qadi said earlier that "the detention is a precautionary measure, and they will stay in custody for few days then will be released."

During Sunday's session of the Lower House deputies criticised the government decision and said that it was "illegal" to ban the activists from travelling.

Court frees Ocalan

ANKARA (R) — A diplomatic crisis between NATO partners Turkey and Italy looked set to flare-up after an Italian court freed Kurdish guerrilla leader Abdullah Ocalan on Wednesday.

Last month, the two governments traded barbs and Turkish protesters smashed Italian goods in the streets in anger at Rome's refusal to extradite the rebel chief.

Italian authorities said they had only detained Ocalan because of a German arrest request. But when the Karlsruhe court withdrew its warrant, and with it a possible

extradition request, the Kurd rebel chief could no longer be held.

Italian Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema said later Ocalan would be kept under police surveillance and could not leave Italy, despite the court ruling. "What happened this morning has not changed the scenario... A surveillance order will be maintained," D'Alema told reporters after meeting party leaders to discuss the arrest.

But D'Alema added that a decision over what to do with the Kurdish rebel leader could wait only a few days longer.

China condemns use of force against Iraq

(Continued from page 1)

Qin said Butler's report "is apparently one-sided and does not reflect the situation on the ground."

He said UNSCOM should have consulted the council before evacuating the inspection team, a view echoed by Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov.

Meanwhile, France, in a rift among Western allies, dissociated itself on Wednesday from U.S.-led air strikes and said they could have grave consequences for the Iraqi people.

A statement issued by the French authorities about an hour after the launch of the campaign against Iraq said: "France deplores the escalation which led to the American military strikes against Iraq and the grave human consequences which they could have for the Iraqi people."

Turkey said on Thursday it was saddened by news of a joint American-British military strike against Iraq and expressed hope that the attack would be a short one.

"The developments are very saddening," a Turkish foreign ministry spokesman told Reuters in Ankara.

"We have always wanted the situation in Iraq to return to normal and the embargo to be lifted by Iraq's full compliance

with United Nations resolutions," he said.

Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien said that "Saddam Hussein has brought this crisis on himself."

The prepared statement was issued less than an hour after Washington and London announced they launched air strikes.

Chretien accused the Iraqi president of "following a deliberate strategy, at great cost to his country."

Germany said on Wednesday it was regrettable that there had been a military strike against Iraq but Iraq had had plenty of chances to avert the use of force.

"The Iraq government was warned that the international community could not look away" from its failure to comply with U.N. weapons inspectors, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's spokesman Uwe Karsten Heye told German Radio. "The German government regrets that it had to come to the military measure."

Heye later added in a statement that the international community had repeatedly called on Iraq to comply with the U.N. Security Council resolutions. He said Iraq had not fulfilled a promise made on Nov. 14 to comply with U.N. demands.

U.S. launches 'substantial' strikes against Iraq

(Continued from page 1)

The strikes came shortly after chief U.N. weapons inspector Richard Butler issued a report on Tuesday complaining that Iraq was breaking a pledge made only last month to give the inspectors full access, and was pulling them out.

In Kuwait, residents spending the weekend at beach homes in the south of the country said they heard what sounded like the launch of missiles possibly from U.S. ships deployed offshore. They said the loud bursts were heard some 30 minutes after midnight local time.

Blair, in a statement delivered outside his Downing Street residence, said: "We have exhausted all other avenues."

Describing British involvement as significant, Blair accused Iraqi President Saddam Hussein of "constant lies, prevarication and breaching of the agreed conditions."

"We have no option but to act," he said, adding that the strikes were aimed at degrading Saddam's capability to build and use weapons of mass destruction.

The U.S. and Britain came within minutes of attacking Iraq when it last defied the inspectors just over a month ago.

President Saddam Hussein put Iraq on a war footing on Wednesday and urged his people to defy the U.S. attempt to make them "kneel."

The two came within minutes of attacking Iraq when it last defied the inspectors just over a month ago.

Israel pulls down 3 Palestinian homes under construction

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli bulldozers tore down three Palestinian houses in various stages of construction in east Jerusalem Wednesday, a day after U.S. President Bill Clinton's visit, witnesses said.

The bulldozers escorted by police demolished a house whose roof had already been built and two others which consisted only of walls in the Jabel Mukabber neighbourhood.

Wael Abu Dabaat, who was building the houses with two of his brothers, said their 30 family members needed new lodging but that the Israeli authorities had refused to give them a building permit, as often happens in Arab east Jerusalem.

"We will build again in spite of the demolitions," he said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his government "don't want Palestinians to live here," he added.

Clinton said during his visit that he understood Palestinian irritation over the routine destruction of houses they are building.

The Palestinians say that they are forced to build without permits because Israel rarely grants them in order to

stop Palestinians from erecting new homes or expanding existing ones.

Israel has destroyed nearly 700 Palestinian houses since the signing of the 1993 Oslo accords with the Palestinians, according to the Palestinian committee on land and the environment.

About 2,000 other houses have been ordered demolished, the committee said.

Under the Israeli-Palestinian accords, the fate of Arab east Jerusalem, which is claimed by both parties, is supposed to be decided in final-status negotiations set to begin soon.

Israel occupied and illegally annexed the eastern part of the Holy City in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

In another development, the Israeli army arrested 17 Palestinians on the West Bank overnight on suspicion of involvement in "hostile activities," an army spokesman said Wednesday.

Fourteen of the suspects were picked up in a sweep through the village of Harmalah near Bethlehem and three elsewhere in the West Bank, he said.

He said the 17 were detained "on suspicion of involvement in hostile activities" but did not elaborate.

Government to decide on IPC Saturday

(Continued from page 1)

But informed sources stressed that legal action concerning the IPC pipelines sale seemed unlikely since there was no evidence of embezzlement or corruption, but rather some sort of flaw in bid procedures.

The Lower House committee is expected to reach a final decision about the IPC case during the coming few days.

On Nov. 21, the government halted all procedures related to the sale of 50 kilometres of 12-inch pipelines and 60 kilometres of 16-inch pipelines which formed part of a disputed pipeline from Iraq to Haifa, and ordered that work on removing the segments be stopped.

In earlier reports, sources told the Jordan Times, "It is clear that the sale of the pipelines was worth up to JD1.5 million, and in any case definitely more than the JD250,000 which the contractor had paid for the pipeline."

The bidding committee did not adhere to the procedures followed in such cases, the report concluded.

As for the present condition of the IPC pipelines, the report concluded that the field investigations showed that about 50 per cent of the 12-inch pipelines and 25 per cent of the 16-inch pipelines were worn out.

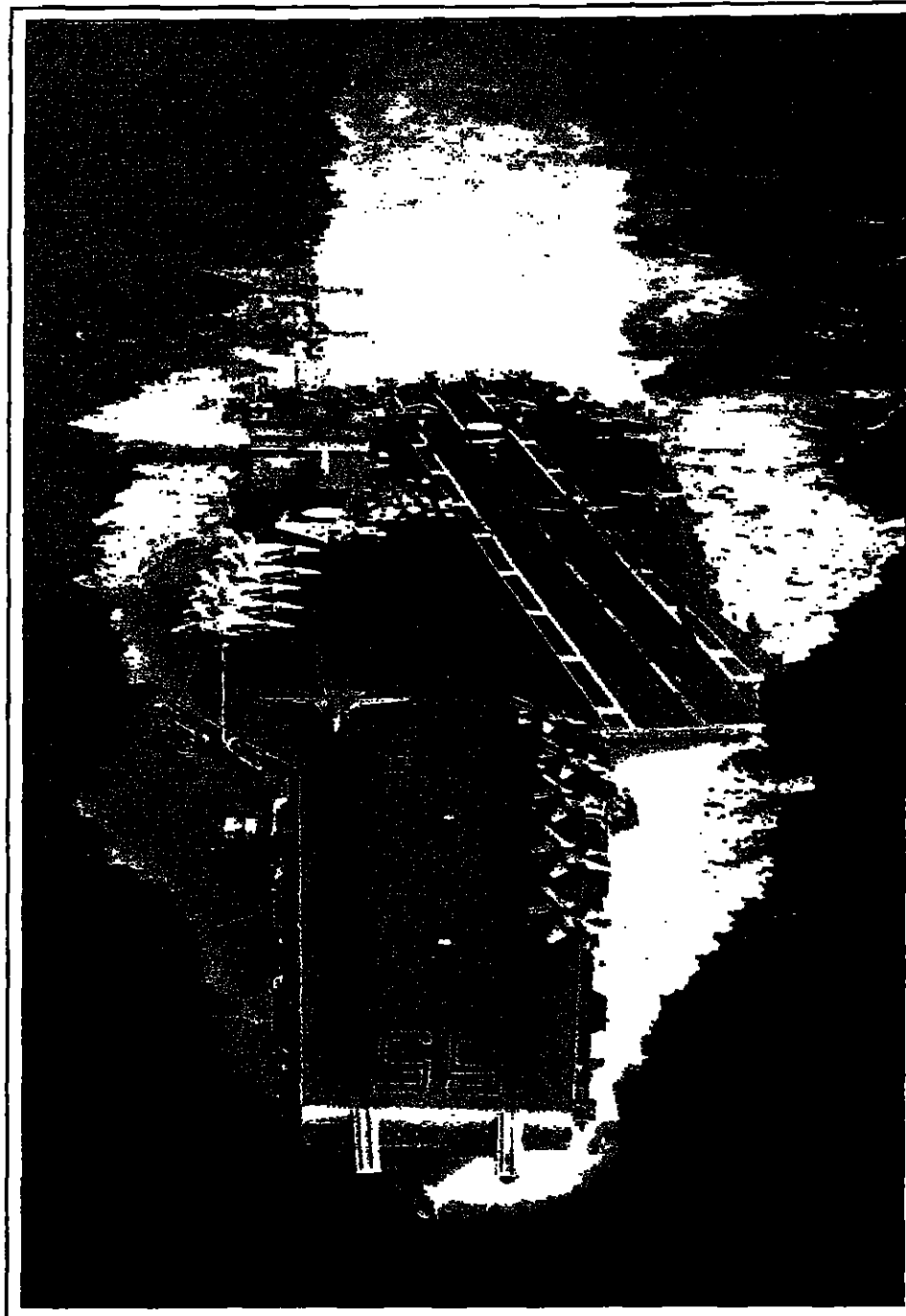
The government issued instructions to store all IPC pipelines at the Aqaba Region Authority pending the conclusion of the investigation.

Mulki also sent two legal memoranda to Akram Amin Abu Amr, who won the bid on July 20, telling him to stop work immediately as he was violating the deal by taking parts of another pipeline that were not included in the official bid.

The pipeline, linking Iraq's northern city of Kirkuk with the Mediterranean city of Haifa via Jordan, was totally shut down after the 1948 war that led to Israel's creation.

It was initially built by a British company in the early 1930s for the Iraqi Petroleum Company.

In a minor Jordanian-Iraqi border demarcation in the early 1980s, Amman was eventually given additional parts of the pipeline which passed through the new areas.



The aircraft carrier USS Enterprise (CVN 65) prepares for flight operations with embarked Carrier Air Wing Three (CVW-3). The Enterprise heads a U.S. naval armada poised in the Gulf for strikes against Iraq on Wednesday following a new U.N. report that Baghdad was not cooperating with arms inspections (Reuters file photo)

Saddam puts Iraq under 4 commands

BAGHDAD (AP) — President Saddam Hussein on Wednesday divided Iraq into four military commands and handed their control to four trusted aides, state media reported.

The move was apparently aimed at preventing any civil uprising against his rule in case the imminent U.S.-British attacks deal severe blows to his authority.

Saddam will, however, retain control over the air force, air defence units and missile units, television and radio stations announced, interrupting normal programming.

The air defence, rather than ground forces, will be Saddam's best hope to counter any air strikes.

The reports said Saddam issued a presidential decree to make the changes.

After the end of the 1991 Gulf war that routed Saddam's forces from Kuwait, 14

provinces in the Shiite south as well as Kurdish north rebelled against the government, but were put down brutally.

The media reports said the Intelligence Department, controlled by a close relative of the president, and the Special Security, run by his son, Qusai, will remain untouched. Special Security is responsible for Saddam's personal security.

The elite Saddam's Commandos, run by Saddam's other son, Uday, will also stay with him, the media reported. The commandos help the Special Security and the Intelligence in their work.

Leaving the three units in trusted hands implied that in case of a personal threat to Saddam, he will continue to have the support of key loyal forces.

The media reports said the four new military commands set up in Iraq are:

The Northern Region, comprising the three Kurdish governorates of Sulaymaniya, Erbil and Dohuk and the northern governorate of Mosul. The region will be commanded by the vice chairman of the decision-making Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), Izzat Ibrahim.

The southern region consisting of Basra, Dhiqar, Misan and Wasit to be commanded by an RCC member, Ali Hasan Al Majid, a cousin of Saddam.

The Central Euphrates region consisting of predominantly Shiite areas of Babylon, Karbala, Najaf, Qadisiya and Muthana will be led by Deputy Prime Minister Mohammad Hamza Al Zubeidi, an RCC member.

The Central region of Baghdad, Salahdin, Anbar, Diyala will be commanded by Defence Minister Hashim Ahmad Sultan.

Netanyahu to call early polls

(Continued from page 1)

"Netanyahu's speech was the launch of the campaign," he said. Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon, speaking immediately after Netanyahu to the Likud leaders, also said early polls were inevitable.

"We cannot continue in the current situation and we have decided, because we have no other choice, to move the elections forward," he said.

Opposition Labour Party leader Ehud Barak ruled out any chance his party would back Netanyahu's motion or join in a national unity government.

"We are going to elections, there can be no unity government," he said.

Netanyahu's initiative appeared above all aimed at avoiding defeat in Monday's no confidence vote, which would provoke new elections within 60 days.

If he initiates the early polls, he can seek a later date in agreement with the Labour Party and gain more time to prepare for the election.

Israeli television reported that Netanyahu had already chosen a preferred date for the elections — April 27 — shortly after the patriotic annual independence day celebrations and ahead of May 4, when the Palestinians have threatened to declare an independent state.

Elections are not scheduled to be held until 2000.

Arafat denounces suspension of pullback

(Continued from page 1)

"Until now the prime minister said he was unable to tell the cabinet that the Palestinians have honoured their obligations and it is thus impossible to carry out the withdrawal scheduled for December 18," the government said in its statement.

"If they honour their commitments, we will honour ours," it added.

Another Palestinian minister, Hassan Asfour, had responded earlier to Netanyahu's decision by say-

ing the Palestinians could suspend their implementation of security measures required by the Wye agreements.

"If Netanyahu does not implement, we will not continue to implement," he said.

While Shaath withdrew the threat, he was scathing about Israeli efforts to evade their obligations under the U.S.-brokered agreement. "This cannot go on... the burden is now on Netanyahu's shoulders to fulfill the agreement," Shaath said, noting that the Wye accords committed not only the government of Israel

but the Israeli people to its land-for-security requirements.

Shaath also reaffirmed the Palestinians' right to unilaterally declare an independent state next May if negotiations with Israel fail to advance — an intention Netanyahu singled out as one of the Palestinians' worst violations of the peace accords.

"We will give all the time necessary to negotiations on a final status until May 4," Shaath said, referring to the date with interim peace accords with Israel expire.

Request to lift Abbadi's immunity sent to committee

(Continued from page 1)

"I was surprised on Tuesday by many local and foreign journalists who called me inquiring about whether or not I received a letter from the prosecutor general," Majali said.

"I completely denied that because I had not actually received anything relating to that matter. However, I found out that [Petra] ran a report saying I had received such a letter."

Majali stressed that he only received the letter on Wednesday and has asked the government to investigate Petra's report, which he said violated the Press and Publications Law, and to hold those officials responsible for running the story accountable.

"I have asked the prime minister to study the matter," Majali told the Jordan Times on Wednesday. "This is the responsibility of the government especially since Petra is an official institution."

A skirt made of live grass

OVERIJSE (R) — Dior, Lagerfeld and Versace eat your heart out. A Belgian horticulturalist has come up with the ultimate ecological fashion statement to give your loved one this Christmas: A skirt made of live grass. The clothes — skirts, tops and dresses — are the idea of Luc Mertens, who lives in the Belgian town of Overijse. The grass is grown on jute matting, instead of earth, for about 25 days, and is then made into garments which continue to grow while you wear them. The end product is striking, if not comfortable: The clothes weigh several kilograms and the water needed to keep the grass alive makes them quite damp.

A French scent for the subway

PARIS (AP) — The French are good at making perfume, but this one may be a stretch: a scent for the subway? That's what the Paris transit authority is offering soon at one station in the French capital in order to make subway travel more pleasant. The floors of the Invalides station, near the Eiffel Tower, will be washed and spread with the perfume, the RATP said Tuesday. The scent to be used will be revealed Friday.

Crook posing as gynaecologist

PARIS (AFP) — A 48-year-old Haitian man was jailed for two years Tuesday for swindling nearly \$190,000 from several people, including a lawyer, while posing as a gynaecologist. Jean-Max Beaulieu moved his victims to reach into their pockets by telling them he had been robbed of his credit cards while heading to the airport to fly to New York, where he had to assist a patient in an emergency situation. Although his scam sometimes failed, he managed between 1996-97 to convince a bar owner, a shopkeeper and a lawyer, among others, to help him out, in exchange for a promise of repayment following a call to his bank in New York.

Sexual dissatisfaction cause of unhappy marriages

BEIJING (AFP) — Sexual dissatisfaction is the main cause of unhappy marriages in rural China, according to a recent survey of rural attitudes to married life reported in the official media Wednesday. Asked what were the main reasons for marital discontent, 44 per cent of couples surveyed in rural eastern Anhui province said a disharmonious sex life, which was described by the official Xinhua news agency as "an unspeakable pain in the old days." The Marriage and Family Research Society survey also found that arranged marriages, once the scourge of women's rights in pre-revolutionary China, were now virtually unheard of in the countryside, with hardly any respondents subscribing to the practice, Xinhua said.

Warning to customers hoping for sexy Christmas

LONDON (R) — Britain's biggest bookseller, W H Smith, issued a red-faced warning to customers hoping for a sexy Christmas with their gift pack edition of the Kama Sutra: "Do not use the massage oil." "The massage oil in the pack may cause irritation to sensitive parts of the body," it said in a recall notice published in British newspapers. It asked purchasers to return for a refund the gift pack, which consisted of a pocket-size copy of the Kama Sutra, a 1,500-year-old Indian sex manual, and some "sensual massage oil."

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